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Neshnabe Treaty Making:
(Re)visionings for Indigenous Futurities in Education

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Neshnabe Treaty Making:
(Re)visionings for Indigenous Futurities in Education

by

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Abstract

Neshnabe Treaty Making:
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This work questions if there is a need for a Native-controlled school in central Oklahoma and evaluates what can be done to improve educational opportunities for Native students (particularly through a Native-controlled school). This research addresses the complex, multifaceted experiences of Native peoples with and in Oklahoma public schools. Three themes, including tribal sovereignty, equality vs. equity for Native students, and the importance of rural schools in Oklahoma, are explored throughout the thesis, which lead to a final tension between the community and colonial (imposed) governments—federal, state, and tribal. Recommendations for anti- and de-colonial action are drawn on traditional forms of *nishnabe* treaty making as a continual process of relationship building. In addressing the ways in which settler coloniality operates in the daily lives of Native peoples, indigenizing and decolonial literature is engaged to (re)(en)vision indigenous futures and possibilities for education outside of the settler state. The project is framed within the theories of Natives studies, settler colonialism, neoliberalism, and Native anti-/de-colonial education and futures.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I have been asked repeatedly throughout my life, "why would you ever live in Oklahoma?" Growing up I split my time between Kent and Parma/Cleveland, Ohio, and then I went on to live in other cities like New York and Austin. No matter where I go, including Oklahoma, the question remains why would I ever live there. Oklahoma has a lot of stereotypes, some deserved and others forgotten, but Oklahoma is home, it has been home since the first day I arrived there. I knew Kansas and Oklahoma long before I ever traveled there from the stories my grandfather would tell me. I knew their histories, the peoples, and the cultures that all continued to thrive there. While my mother and grandfather mostly lived and visited Kansas—where the old Citizen Potawatomi Reservation was—there were always continuous trips to Pottawatomie, Oklahoma, and Cleveland Counties in Oklahoma. There was always a need to visit these places every year of my mother's childhood, she would explain to me. I never physically traveled to these places as a child, but they were still a part of me. While many do not find Oklahoma to be special or interesting, I always find myself called back to there by the deep histories, and my own family's history, of the area.

Very few find a need to discuss Oklahoma, many assume it's just another one of those flyover states in the middle of America, however Oklahoma is home to many deep and traumatic histories that America would like to forget. As the heart and last remaining piece of Indian Territory, Oklahoma is home to 39 federally recognized tribal nations—the majority of these tribal nations being removed there throughout the 19th and 20th

centuries—along with many other tribal nations represented from across the Americas. Oklahoma is a complicated place with intricate histories and relationships, not only between the peoples there and the settler governments of Oklahoma and the U.S., but also between the various tribal nations removed there throughout time. In Pottawatomie County alone, there are four tribal nations headquartered there—meaning four governments, four distinct cultures and communities, four jurisdictions—this does not even begin to include the local and state settler governments' roles in Pottawatomie County. Despite four tribal nations being headquartered there, in the larger towns of Shawnee and Tecumseh the three tribal nations most represented—Seminole, Cherokee, and Creek—do not have any jurisdictional claims there. As demonstrated, Pottawatomie County is a diverse place, but is often not viewed as such by non-Natives who perceive all Indians to be the same.

I first physically lived in Oklahoma when I was 20 years old as an intern at Citizen (Band) Potawatomi Nation.[1] I was selected to participate in the Potawatomi Leadership Program, where I would get to learn about everything that goes into running a Tribal Nation in six weeks. The six weeks passed by quickly, but I was able to build some working and personal relationships, and from that point on I began to return to Oklahoma during every winter and summer break. It was not until my second summer there that I began to really get to know the community. I had been attending Potawatomi Community events, but I began to attend other Native community events and get to know

[1]Today, the tribal nation is officially the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, but growing up I had always been taught that I was Citizen Band Potawatomi. I will use these terms interchangeably. In an Oklahoma context, it is more common to here Citizen Potawatomi Nation, or CPN, but during times were multiple Potawatomi bands and nations are gathered together, Citizen Band is the more common term.

people from those communities. Between my second and third summer was when I began to really work with local Native youth—many of whom were (Citizen and Prairie Band) Potawatomi, Shawnee, Kickapoo, Seminole-Creek, Sac and Fox, Cherokee, and Yuchi. Naively, I believed their schooling experiences had to be somewhat better, or at least different, than mine.

Growing up in Ohio, I was typically one of two Native students (the other being my younger brother). One year I was lucky enough to have a friend transfer from another local school who was Quechua, but she returned to her original school her senior year. The majority of my teachers assumed most Natives no longer existed, most—if not all—held very antiquated, stereotypical ideas of who was and what it meant to be Native, and if teachers tried to be culturally relevant I received books like "Indian in the Cupboard" or "The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush." These books reinforced Whitestream stereotypes of Native Americans, specifically Native Americans as only existing in the past and as an individual, Plains (warrior), male Native, who existed outside of context, community, and culture. I expected, but I was not surprised, that the majority of the youth I worked with dealt with almost the exact same issues I had in school.

To me, as a non-native Oklahoman Potawatomi, this was a space in which Native Americans were able to exist and live their lives in t-shirts, basketball shorts, Jordan's, and bling-ed out powwow earrings. No one could ignore these Native peoples and tribal nations that they lived next to and among; however, they could. Settler colonial logics continue to permeate Oklahoma, so Natives become Indians and Oklahoma settlers [Sooners] continue to attempt to erase the Indian roots and construction(s) of Indian

Territory, or *Okla humma*[2]. These schools continue to celebrate the settler history of Oklahoma, with reenactments of the nineteenth century land runs and the "'89er Parades." In ninth grade Oklahoma history, a small section is dedicated to the "Five Civilized Tribes," but there is little to no mention of the other 36 Tribal Nations (federally and community recognized) located throughout Oklahoma—those indigenous and removed to this place. As in all public schools, Native students face colonial and racist institutional practices from Native and non-Native teachers. Yet these students are resisting, but no one is watching, no one is listening (L. Pochedley, 2014). It was disappointing to find out a place with so much potential to do so much good ended up doing very little.

The work I have done and the conversations I have had with Native youth, their families, and community members over the past four years have lead to my research questions for this thesis. The central questions are:

1. What are Native Americans' past and current experiences with public schools in Oklahoma?
2. Is there a need for an Intertribal, Native-controlled school?
3. What does the community imagine this school would need to implement and accomplish to serve the needs of the diverse Native community of Pottawatomie County (and surrounding tribal jurisdictional areas)?

These questions are important because no one is asking them: Native people, students in particular, are talking, but no one is listening. For my thesis I will focus on the

[2] Okla humma is *Chahta*/Choctaw for "Red People"

experiences of Native peoples in and with Oklahoma public school systems--whether it is as a parent, educator, elder, or community leader--and the possibilities a Native controlled school in the area could create. Throughout all of my interviews, it has been said an intertribal, Native-controlled school would be a difficult project due to the endless tribal politics, histories, relationships, and various cultures, but it is not impossible. Patience, planning, discussion, and continuous listening must always be present in such a venture, but it is a necessarily one to explore in the current neoliberal climate of Oklahoma and the U.S.

In chapter two, I provide a review of the literature relevant to my research; the majority of authors engaged are primarily Native scholars (citizens of their respective tribal nations) who are working in the field of Native studies. I prioritize Native voices due to the long, complicated histories Native peoples and nations have with academia and being able to speak for themselves. Overall, few Native studies theories are being employed within the realm of education, but Native and Native studies scholars seldom engage the experiences, outcomes, and theories of (Native) education. There are always exceptions, such as Sandy Grande, Greg Cajete, Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, Kathryn Manuelito, Marie Ann Battiste, Beatrice Medicine, James Youngblood Henderson, Tiffany Lee, Leona Kokakok, among others.[3] There is a rising field of research on Native experiences in higher education and Indigenous leadership, seen in the work of Stephanie Waterman, Bryan Brayboy, Robin Starr Zapetahholah Minthorn, Charlotte Davidson,

[3] This list is far from complete. Many of these scholars have gained academic recognition, and this list fails to address all the hard work of Native people working in their communities to better Native education.

Heather Shotton, and Adrienne Keene. Additionally, there are more Native and non-Native scholars taking seriously the anti- and de-colonial work and research methodologies first proposed by Indigenous researchers, such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Sandy Grande, and are now being further pursued and pushed by Eve Tuck, Leigh Patel, and many other young student scholars. All of these Native academics and their research operate within the field of education, but the mainstream theories of education have failed to truly engage many of these scholars' (and other Natives scholars in other disciplines) fundamental theories, positions, and work. Also in the past, few Native education scholars have engaged the theories of Native studies and applied them to the on-the-ground experiences of Native students in U.S. schools.

The realm of education has largely failed to interact and employ many Native theories of change, existence, and pedagogy. While I am not disregarding the vigorous work of many education scholars, I am actively choosing to engage Native studies and *neshnabe* frameworks. Many of the theories in education cannot fully account for Native epistemologies and theories due to the different ontological and cosmological views of existence. Most educational theories operate under the assumption of the continuance of the state (whether it be under different economic, governmental, or legal conditions). As colonized people still living in our occupied homelands—who governed themselves for centuries under drastically different systems and structures—we do not contend that the state, built upon and forever entrenched in settler logics, is a permanent structure. When truly engaging decolonial theories, we must be able to imagine possibilities outside of the settler state. In chapter three, I outline my own positionality as a *neshnabekwe* who grew

up closer to northern Potawatomi communities and only recently living in my own community. In addition to my positionality, I engage the work of Indigenous research methods to outline the methodology of the research study.

The first tension is the question of whether separate could be equal for tribal nations due to the history of education in Native communities will be addressed in the fourth chapter. Since the earliest days of American colonization in 1492, European settlers have discounted, ignored, and actively erased Indigenous epistemologies, theories, methodologies, histories, and existence. Throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, these eradications have strongly been enacted in the realm of education. These eradications came in the forms of settler colonial policies, media, metahistories presented in textbooks, linguicide, other forms of cultural and physical genocide, and many other insidious representations and acts (Chang, 2011; Deloria, 1969; Hoxie, 2001; Smith, 2005; Wolfe, 2006). One particularly infamous and egregious example of eradication throughout the history of Native education in North America are the Indian boarding schools.

At their peak during the 1880s-1920s, federal and church officials kidnapped Native children from their communities and contained them in government or religious boarding schools where it was proclaimed that these institutions would "kill the Indian and save the child" (Pratt, 1892). These schools, such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School, United States Indian Industrial School or more commonly known as the Haskell Institute, and Flandreau Indian School, were given the project of assimilating or "Americanizing" Native American children by destroying their language and culture and

training them to be underpaid laborers and second-class citizens (Child, 1998; Hoxie, 2001). These histories of education inform our present relationships and experiences with schools, and due to these assimilationist policies (i.e., boarding schools, allotment, termination, urban relocation) we must be conscious that Native education does not simply occur in isolated reservation schools. Over, ninety percent of Native children attend public schools—these include schools in rural, suburban, and urban spaces (Grande, 2015). Thus, self-education also needs to be critically thought about and produced in reservation, rural, and urban settings (Kaomea, 2005; Lomawaima and McCarty, 2002). Self-education is linked our status as sovereign nations, and it our inherent right to self-govern, self-define, and I believe, self-educate.

This first tension is addressed throughout the three themes addressed in chapter 3.

1. Tribal Sovereignty, and how far does it extend?
2. Equality vs. Equity, but what about sovereignty?
3. Rural Schools: The Bedrock of Oklahoma

To understand this first tension, in chapter four, we must examine the role of tribal sovereignty and the unique position Native Americans occupy under this settler principle. While I do not wish to ignore the ways in which tribal nations engage and enact tribal sovereignty on their own terms, I examine tribal sovereignty from the ground up, turning to people's ideas and understandings of the concept. I purposefully engage the perspectives of people coming from non-academic or official tribal backgrounds, and ask them to reflect on its impact on their daily lives. In academia, tribal sovereignty is heavily theorized. In government realms it is legally engaged and contested, but I maintain that

we think through tribal sovereignty existing and operating in the everyday life of Native people and to what extent it serves as a relevant governing structure. After establishing the limits of everyday tribal sovereignty, we can then turn to the tension—is separate equal for tribal nations? Is this option the best according to Native values and teachings? To conclude chapter four, we turn to the role of the rural school in Oklahoma—what positions it has occupied and what possibilities has it allowed for Native communities. Due to the lack of Native-controlled or Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Schools in Oklahoma, many of these rural schools host large populations of Native students. We must account for what is occurring in these schools—good and bad—to understand what must be imagined as possibilities and futures outside of a settler state.

The second tension apparent from the start of the research was the intertribal politics, histories, and relationships that continue exist and evolve every day. In all my interviews there has been no easy fix for a problem that plagues many places like Oklahoma, Texas, and California. These histories and relationships are long, deep, and complicated, and can no longer be ignored. To address this tension, it is necessary to return to many of our traditional teachings about relationships and new explorations of (inter)tribal solidarity. In my fifth chapter and epilogue, I will explore this tension more in depth due to its complexity and draw upon the original calls of coalition building between tribal nations first started by Tkamse[4] (Tecumseh) in the early 1800s.

In chapter four, I turn to Tkamse because of the space he still occupies within the Native communities in central Oklahoma. One of the largest towns in Pottawatomie

[4] This spelling of Tecumseh comes from a fellow *nishnaabe* scholar (Leanne Simpson, 2014).

County is named after him, and many of his descendants live in the area. The figure of Tkamse is still upheld, but much of his story and purpose is forgotten. I provide the text of his speech to the Choctaws and Chickasaws before the start of the War of 1812 to show his prose and predictions, but also to fully understand what it meant for him to travel from Ohio to the Deep South to meet with these nations. The meeting that resulted was not some quick, diplomatic meeting, but a meeting structured on Native values of relationship building and visitation. While Tkmase was ultimately not successful, it is important to learn from his and other mistakes to imagine the possibilities and futures many of these leaders were asking us to do back then and what we should do now.

Traditionally, we are taught that we must make decisions in the best interests of the community (not the individual), but also think about our decisions impact seven generations into the future. While a Native-controlled school could produce the future tribal leaders of tomorrow, it is important to think about the generational impact of removing Native youth from public schools, especially in a place like central Oklahoma. There are no traditional reservations, and every one has to live next to one another. Thus, when analyzing the tension of intertribal politics and relationships, we also must acknowledge the complex Native-settler relationships that also exist in these areas and the disconnect that could be exasperated by the absence of the Native communities in public schools.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

In our current society, public education systems are not just failing, but being actively destroyed by neoliberal reforms pushed by the wealthiest and most powerful in the country. Much of the research on the effects of neoliberal reforms has focused on urban centers, such as Pauline Lipman's work in Chicago and Kristen Buras' work in New Orleans, but rural areas like Pottawatomie County in Oklahoma are currently experiencing the deleterious effects of these policies, as well. Rural schools, most commonly schools serving below 500 (primarily low-income, White, and Native) students, are facing continuous defunding by the state of Oklahoma seen in the moves to four-day school weeks and threats of school consolidation. Oklahoma has received $980 million in gaming fees, with an impact of $6.9 billion from solely tribal gaming. 30 Tribal Nations have current state compacts with Oklahoma and 88 percent of the fees are allocated for education (Hownikan, January 2016). As schools are being defunded across the state and teachers are barely being paid livable wages, blamed on the state's budget crisis, many question what the state of Oklahoma is doing with these additional funds. In this new climate of public education turmoil transpiring against the vividly felt backdrop of long, painful histories with schooling institutions, Native communities in Central Oklahoma have been questioning what educational options are available to their youth. This thesis explores the past and current experiences of Native Americans in and with Oklahoma public school systems, asks if there is a community need for Native-controlled

school in the area, and considers what the local Native communities imagine the school to implement and accomplish.

As Jodi Byrd (2011) outlines in the introduction of her book, "Transit of Empire" most critical and postcolonial theories and theorists have avoided discussions of the U.S. as a (settler) colonial empire, particularly in relationship to the Indigenous peoples that always lived (and continue to live on these lands). She questions what may occur if these theories

> Activat[ed] the Indian as a foundational concept within poststructural, postcolonial, and critical race theories leads to one of the overarching questions of this book: How might in terms of current academic and political debates change if the responsibilities that very real lived condition of colonization was prioritized as a condition of possibility? (Byrd, 2011: xx).

What happens when we center the "Indian" in the development of the U.S. as a settler colonial nation-state? To truly understand U.S. national identity, we must understand it as first developed in relationship to original, Indigenous peoples of these lands. To center the "Indian" in these theories, pulls into question all forms of liberatory, transformative, inclusive actions, which operate within the confines of the multicultural, neoliberal, settler democracy. When we start at the beginning of this country we learn that the entirety of the U.S. settler colonial institution operates through the continual dispossession of stolen, Indigenous land. This argument does not call for the creation of a new binary, but rather calls for the demarcation between the colonizing and racializing processes that structured this country, and the fact that these processes cannot be used interchangeably (Byrd, 2011). When we center the Indian, very different imaginaries of anti-colonial struggles and decolonial futurities become apparent.

Settler colonial studies and critical Indigenous theory are relatively new fields of study in Western academia, but are situated within much longer epistemologies and ontologies of Indigenous communities, most living under settler colonial democracies, including the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Little engagement has occurred between these fields and the field of education, also due to the lack of educational research in Indigenous settings (particularly in the U.S.) due to the "statistical irrelevance of Native populations in relation to the larger U.S. population" (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010; Patel, 2016). As a *neshnabekwe* who was raised in these cultural and academic traditions, my work is situated and engaged with(in) these Indigenous critical theories and its intersections with settler colonialism studies. Some educational research has begun to engage with theories of decolonization and Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies of research, but at times this work can forgot what this country was founded upon: the continuous need to dispossess Indigenous lands and what true, absolute material decolonization means for these lands (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

SETTLER COLONIALISM

One must always begin with the late Patrick Wolfe's (2006) famous phrase, "Settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event" (388). This statement must be framed within an understanding of the severity and violence the settler colonizers institute to take and stay on Indigenous lands. Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism based upon in the conquest and extraction of (natural) resources, but is rooted in a need for land (and continuous expansion). Thus, this need for land simultaneously

dispossesses Indigenous peoples of their traditional homelands and resources, but also needs (Black) bodies to labor (leading to the institution of chattel slavery) upon the stolen land all in the name of White profit and progress (Patel, 2016; Wolfe, 2006). In North America, settler colonialism operates through a triad of relationships, between the (white [but not always]) settlers, the Indigenous inhabitants, and African chattel slaves (Arrivants)[5] who are removed from their homelands to work stolen land. At the crux of these relationships is land, highly valued and disputed. Land--something animate to be lived in relationship with--in being settled, becomes property. Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) explains,

> In the settler mind, land was property, real estate, capital or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our land was where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold (17).

For settlers to live on and profit from land, they must eliminate Indigenous peoples, and extinguish their historical, epistemological, philosophical, moral and political claims to land. Settlers must also import chattel slaves, who must be kept landless, and who also become property, to be used, abused, and managed.

Settlers and their families come to stay to "work" and profit from these lands which are not theirs, thus they must erase the Indigenous peoples to allow themselves to become the natural ("indigenous") inheritors of the lands (O'Brien, 2010; Wolfe, 2006).

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[5] Jodi Byrd (2011) uses the term, "Arrivant," borrowed from African Caribbean poet—Kamau Brathwraite, for enslaved Africans who were forcibly brought to the U.S. Because Arrivants were forcibly taken to the U.S. they are not settlers within the structure of settler colonialism, but they are also not Indigenous to these lands.

Thus, we must understand the Anglo-Europeans who first came to "settle" North America are not immigrants because they never intended to recognize us as peoples and nations who had deep and intricate claims to these lands—whether it be by participating in our communities or nations, following our laws, or engaging with our epistemologies (Tuck & Yang, 2012). To make sense of the Anglo-Europeans as settlers rather than immigrants one can turn to Mark Rifkin's (2014) work on what he terms as "settler common sense." He defines this common sense as "the ways the legal and political structures that enable non-Native access to Indigenous territories come to be lived as a given, as simply the unmarked, generic conditions of possibility for occupancy, association, history and personhood" (xvi). Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) elaborate "Settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies. Therefore, settler nations are not immigrant nations" (Tuck & Yang, 2012: 6-7). Settler Colonialism is a continuous structure and there is no example of a post-settler colonial state (Byrd, 2011). Strong and effective critiques have been raised about theory and etymology of settler colonialism, particularly around the use of the word settler and questioning if this theory allows for an escape from the accepted harshness of imperialism and colonialism (Tequilla Sovereign, 2011). A category needs to exist to further examine colonization and imperialism within the U.S. context because within Whitestream contexts U.S. imperialism does not begin until the late 1800's in the Pacific. The colonization of the Americas and its original peoples and nations is largely absent in the Eurocentric-based realms of history, education, and post-colonial studies (Byrd, 2011). Anglo-Europeans become Amer-European, then Euro-Americans, and finally U.S.

Americans, who are not immigrants to Turtle Island, but settlers that come to colonize in the name of European, and now U.S., imperialism. Imperialism is the descriptor of the global structure of European (and now U.S.) capitalist expansion and exploitation. Therein, diverse and specific kinds of "colonialisms" are enacted. "Settler colonialism" is, in other words, but one type of the way imperialism is carried out, specifically in occupied, Indigenous territories.

When one analyzes the construction of the U.S. citizen it was and still is created in opposition to the Indigenous peoples of these occupied lands. The White settlers who come to stay regulate Indigenous peoples as incompetent, savage, and child-like due to their "misuse" of land.

> Settler colonialism often functions as a historically created system of power that expropriates Indigenous territories and eliminates modes of production in order to replace Indigenous peoples with *settlers who are discursively constituted as superior and thus more deserving of these contested lands and resources*…This takes place often through the targeting for elimination of one or more sets of human to nonhuman relations, in many Indigenous epistemologies described as genealogical relations. And all along, in the death of these relations, is the birth of capitalism… (Saranillio, 2015: 640).

The land is regarded as "*terra nullius*"—empty and for the taking. However, the concept of *terra nullius* does not end with the land, but also extends to the bodies of Native women, women who are the foundation of our nations. As settler common sense normalizes *terra nullius* in regards to the taking of land and women's bodies, the rampant historical and ongoing violence towards them is exposed, all in the name of capitalism, progress, and personal liberties. For the land to be (made) empty, the Native must be

eliminated, and within the U.S. context it is through the means of genocide, linguicide, discourse, and currently, multicultural/neoliberal politics of inclusion.

As Patrick Wolfe (2006) states, "contests for land can be—indeed, often are—contests for life" (387) and "settler colonialism destroys to replace" (388). It is not enough for the land to be destroyed and ravaged under the premise of resource extraction, but the bodies of Native peoples, particularly women—bodies that are symbolic of Indigenous relationships to land and polity—must be treated as the (settler) abstractions of land and nation according to settler logics.[6] Audra Simpson (2014a) conceptualizes the connections between women and sovereignty that also cannot be disconnected from land,

> "They [Haudenosaunee Women] represented an alternative political order...they embodied and signaled something radically different from euro-Canadian governance, and this meant that part of dispossession, and settler possession, mean that coercive and modifying, sometimes killing power, had to target their bodies. Because as with all bodies, these bodies were more than just flesh, these were and are sign systems that effect and affect political life and choices".

This logic of Native elimination is not strictly informed by race or religion, but by the need for acquiring new lands (Wolfe, 2006) and I would add the need to "domesticate" those lands and the nations and peoples already living with them. Thus, the intersections between and the current anti-colonial struggles for land, Indigenous sovereignty, and bodily self-determination cannot be untangled and extracted (Deer, 2015; Million, 2013). As Dian Million (2013) charges "gender violence…marks the evisceration of Indigenous nations" (7). It is through the ideological validations for invasion and subsequent

[6] Native women suffer the highest rate of per capita rape in the US (Bachman, Ronet et al. "Estimating the Magnitude of Rape and Sexual Assault against American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) Women." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 43 no. 2 (2010): p. 199.)

genocide(s) (in the U.S.) that logics of race, gender, sexuality, savagery, religion are enacted. Thus, the settler, and eventually the U.S. citizen in this case, comes to stay, but also "he makes himself the sovereign and arbiter of citizenship, civility, and knowing" (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013: 73). The Native must be dehumanized, eliminated, and eventually appropriated in attempts to legitimize and secure settler claims to Indigenous lands and new government(s).

Jean O'Brien (2010) argues "the effect of their [New Englanders] ideological labor is to appropriate the category 'indigenous' away from Indians and for themselves" (xxii). The settler must become "indigenous" and Indians are structured to exist only in the past because they can never be modern (they have been…eliminated, defeated, erased, assimilated, or minoritized). "Settler colonialism operates through internal/external colonial modes simultaneously because there is no spatial separation between metropole and colony...The horizons of the settler colonial nation-state are total and require a mode of total appropriation of Indigenous life and land" (Tuck & Yang, 2012: 5). Thus, the Natives who continue to exist, resist, and survive cannot be real, authentic Indians, according to the settler's construction and deployment of the racialized "Indian" as (noble) savage, pre-modern, and "full-blooded." As seen in O'Brien's work (2010), the settlers need a symbolic, stereotyped notion of the Native to manipulate and appropriate to assert their difference but also create a "new" (national) identity as a "free colony." This deep, ideological appropriation surrounds us with names of cities--the centers, or the metropoles, of U.S. imperialism and capitalism, like the *Lenni Lenape's*

*mannahatta (*Manhattan*)* and the *Neshnabek chicagoua (*Chicago*)*[7]*,* the stories and idealization of the frontiersman and cowboy, and even the structure of the U.S. federal government.

Colonization and racialization can be understood as working in tandem for the same or similar goals, these two instruments of imperialism cannot be conflated or used interchangeably within the U.S. context. Byrd (2011) focuses on the delineating these two processes, particularly in regards to how racialization can work to sustain the settler colonial project by making it invisible,

> But the larger concern is that this conflation masks the territoriality of conquest by assigning colonization to the racialized body, which is then policed in its degrees from whiteness. Under this paradigm, American Indian national assertions of sovereignty, self-determination, and land rights disappear into U.S. territoriality as indigenous identity becomes a racial identity and citizens of colonized indigenous nations become internal ethnic minorities within the colonizing nation state (Byrd, 2011: xxvi).

This is not to argue that Natives do not face racial discrimination, but rather to understand the Native is first colonized *and* then racialized, thus action for Indigenous liberation and resurgence must always engage and address colonization. Indians are racialized in opposing ways to Black people in the U.S. due to the logic of elimination (Wolfe, 2006). " Native America-ness is *subtractive:* Native Americans are constructed to become fewer in number and *less* Native, but never exactly white, over time" (Tuck & Yang, 2012: 12). Indians are racialized out of existence in order to erase their claims to land and justify settler claims to property. This is seen in eliminatory, assimilatory policies like blood

[7] Tuck & Yang (2012) further interrogate the relevance of US city names taken from Indigenous languages in regards to settler colonialism on p.23.

quantum; however, when these policies proved to be unsuccessful, the push for racializing Indians within the rhetoric of the liberal multicultural state served as a new form of elimination, particularly in regards to Indigenous ties to land. Also, when we address colonization and racialization as two processes within the larger project of imperialism, it allows us to locate the underpinnings, and when we address these multiple underpinnings the closer we can get to anti/decolonization action (Patel, 2016).

SOVEREIGNTY

Native Nations and peoples have never stopped fighting to assert their "true" sovereignty, autonomy, and responsibilities to rule and speak for themselves, in spite of the settler colonial institutionalized policies such as blood quantum, state-led violence, (male) settler impunity (particularly in regard to sexual violence), [imposed democratization, nation-state notions of sovereignty, allotment, boarding schools, wardship, and U.S. citizenship. These tools of the United States settler colonial government were first employed to eliminate us and continue to be used to colonize us from within—continuously oppressing and *dispossessing* us of our inherent responsibility of Indigenous Nationhood (Grande, 2015). As seen in the ways in which federal laws (and their legal loopholes) essentially allow for corporations to consume and exploit Indigenous territories and for non-Native men to rape Native women with impunity, settler colonialism is evolvingly constant. "Indeed, the crisis of rape in tribal communities is inextricably linked to the way in which the United States developed and sustained a legal system that has usurped the sovereign authority of tribal nations" (Deer, 2015: xiv).

The U.S. settler colonial state works to continually structure, attack, and disregard our lives, relationships, and sovereignty (Million, 2013). I believe that calling upon an individual's sense of responsibility, rather than asserting claims or rights, is most effective in helping us to remember and use our traditional knowledge. We do not have claims and rights to each other, but we do have responsibilities to each other, our traditions (cultural, political, language, and historical), and the land (L. Pochedley, 2013). State sanctioned notions of sovereignty are foreign to our philosophies and epistemologies, yet it is a practice that has become completely internalized by our communities (Alfred, 1999; Grande, 2015). The U.S. settler and nation-state colonial projects prevent Indigenous Nationhood and impose tribal sovereignty by regulating our Native values and objectives. Tribal sovereignty implements and requires a constant surveillance of our "self-determination, -governance, and –regulation" by the settler government. We have accepted these impositions because it allows us to help and support our people, but it prevents our absolute emancipation from settler control (Alfred, 1999; Barker, 2005; Grande, 2015).

The United States claims to "recognize" Native Nations, as evidenced by Obama's confident proclamation of his wishes to "build on our true government-to-government relationship" (Obama, 2013, paragraph six). Recent history proved that this is not the case; we remain domestic "nations within" (Deloria & Lytle, 1998) and "citizens-but-wards" (Lomawaima, 2013). "True sovereignty," or what some refer to as Indigenous Nationhood (Alfred, 1999), is the reality to employ our values, objectives, and responsibilities to all living, relational beings without surveillance and regulations

imposed by the settler colonial government. It is a form of "self-termination" (Deloria & Lytle, 1998) in which a real "nation-to-nation" relationship is formed, respected, and practiced. "Since it [American government] will never understand the intangible, spiritual, and emotional goals of American Indians, it [tribal sovereignty] cannot be understood as the final solution to Indian problems" (Deloria & Lytle, 1998: 15). In the same way the U.S. government will never truly attempt understand the goals, values, and objectives of tribal nations, I argue that Native students, Native dual citizenship, and Indigenous sovereignty will also never be understood in non-Native public schools and institutions. Since the institutions of schools and education within the U.S. have always been driven and employed as centers to reproduce and rearticulate U.S. settler colonialism with regards to the positionalities of Natives, settlers, and arrivants, we must consider carefully what Western-modeled schools can realize and undertake as anti- or de- colonial spaces (Simpson in Grande, 2015).

REARTICULATIONS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM THROUGH NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONS: SCHOOL REFORM, MULTICULTURALISM, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

David Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as "the first instance a theory of political economy practices that proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within and institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2), or more simply put, "free market fundamentalism" (7). Many trace the beginnings of neoliberalism to the elections of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the late 1970s, in addition to the effects of the post-World War II Keynesian economic practices that had

been labeled as failing (i.e., stagflation) (Brown, 2015; Harvey, 2005). The reasoning and theorizing of neoliberalism appeared new and inventive, particularly with the rise of the "the Chicago boys," a group of economists who trained or engaged with Milton Friedman's neoliberal theories (Harvey, 2005: 8). Yet, when we investigate and deconstruct the underpinnings of neoliberalism, we discover that neoliberalism is nothing new in the Americas, but rather a contemporary, rearticulation of settler colonialism within the borders of the U.S. and more largely the European-turned U.S. imperial project.

Neoliberalism allowed and allows for an unbridled [global] capitalism that seeks to destroy all public spheres of life for the continual, maximal accumulation of capital for the few at the expense of the majority because it will allow for further "liberties" for the majority within the realms such as individualism, private property, and personal responsibility (or choice). As an economic theory enacted through political, governmental means, neoliberalism in practice has largely been most successful at restoring the power of the economic elite, although these new elites may not be the elites of the past (Harvey, 2005). To further understand how neoliberalism is a contemporary rearticulation of settler colonialism, we must return to the fulcrum of settler colonialism--the insatiable need for "empty" land to "work" in the name of profit and wealth regardless of the claims of Indigenous peoples who were there (and were always there).

One must understand the original sin of the United States--the dispossession and subsequent genocide of Indigenous peoples, governing systems, and ways of life (Grande, 2015)--to understand the current dispossessions of public spaces within U.S.

borders and the dismantling of "savage," or rather "undemocratic," nations abroad under the guise of neoliberalism, progress, and democracy. As Byrd (2011) argues this "reproduction of Indianness" or "to make 'Indian'" (p. xx) allows for the U.S. to employ these logics rooted in settler colonialism to further their imperial claims to and over the world. It serves the U.S. imperial project by "facilitat[ing], justify[ing], and maintain[ing] Anglo-American hegemonic mastery over the significations of justice, democracy, law, and terror" and allows for them to savagize ("make Indian") any "peoples or nations who stand in the way of U.S. military and economic desires" (Byrd, 2011: xx). The exploration of U.S. colonization of the Americas, particularly North America, has largely been ignored due to its unique status as a settler colony--thus, operating as metropole and colony within the same spatial confines (Tuck & Yang, 2012). When communities, peoples, and nations are "made Indian," settler colonial logics of dispossession and subsequently erasure allow for legitimation of current neoliberal projects, such as, privatizing schools, unlocking access to natural resources (i.e., timber), deconstructing labor unions in the name of "common good."

The privatization of schools (and other public spaces) has been spearheaded by the neoliberal policies institutionalized by our public, elected officials in the support of the economic elite. Widespread privatization of schools has occurred in cities, such as New Orleans, Chicago, and New York, through the institutionalization of charter schools. It is a common practice in these cities, and other cities across the U.S., when a school is deemed "failing" according the top-down, prescribed accountability measures (i.e., high stakes standardized testing, school report cards, etc) the school can/will be closed. Just as

Anglo-American settlers deemed these Indigenous lands to be "uncultivated," and therefore not "owned" by the Indigenous peoples of this place, the contemporary settlers have deemed these schools and spaces to be "unproductive" according to their terms of usefulness, accountability. and/or productivity.

The moves towards privatizing schools, including entire school districts, have been analyzed in the work of Pauline Lipman (Chicago), David Stovall (Chicago), and Kristen Buras (New Orleans). Much of their work analyzes how the privatization of schools movement has disproportionately affected working class communities of color, and these communities (re)actions and resistance toward these education initiatives that claim they are for the betterment of their children and the larger community. Aptly defined as the "corporate take-over of public education" (Lipman, 2012, paragraph 1) schools are closed due to their "inability" to be accountable/successful. "For years now, students, teachers, and communities in Chicago and other cities across the United States have faced an intensifying wave of 'reforms' that have deskilled veteran teachers' work, closed down neighborhood public schools, and reopened them as privately managed charter schools--all as a market-based approach allegedly aimed at improving urban education" (Buras, Ferrare, & Apple, 2013: 1). Corporate "reform" of public schools first began with the rise of high stakes testing and standardized curriculum, but school privatization (via charters) and teacher de-professionalization have been central to the neoliberal reform movement within the education and public spheres of the U.S. (and other places in the world).

While charter schools have been a tool for neoliberal reforms that serve to restructure the class system in the best interests of economic elites, Indigenous and tribal nations have used charter schools as way to further expand tribal (education) sovereignty to create "culturally sustaining/revitalizing" schools that address Indigenous languages, cultural traditions, and tribal sovereignty (Goodyear-Ka'opua, 2013; McCarty & Lee, 2014). Due the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), tribal government did (and some still) function similarly to U.S. corporations grounded in a (capitalistic) business model (often referred to as a business committee). By adopting this government/business model in the late 1930s, tribal nations were "allowed" more authority to manage their internal affairs without constant oversight by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (E. Pochedley, 2016).

Tribal nations, such as the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, have created charter schools in the last ten to fifteen years to further linguistic and cultural sovereignty (i.e., Cherokee Immersion Charter School - *Tsalagi Tsunadeloquasdi*). Additionally, Native communities in urban areas have also founded charter schools, such as the Native American Community Academy (NACA, in Albuquerque, NM) and *Halua Ku Mana* (HKM, in Honolulu, HI). The diverse (and controversial) engagement of charter schools will be further explored in my thesis because it is a point of contention within the community. As Goodyear-Ka'opua (2013) unavoidably warns us, "Indigenous decolonizing projects that seek to erode settler state authority must be self-critically aware of the possibilities of becoming linked with privatization schemes that deepen inequalities and uphold fundamental values that run counter to our own" (p. 9). While many (contemporary) social movements have continuously erased Indigenous claims to

these lands (rural and urban) and to modern existence (i.e., Occupy Wall Street, Anti-Police Brutality activism, LGBTQ activism, the Flint Water Crisis, etc), we must live our teachings about relationality (i.e., inter/intra-tribal; Native-Arrivant-Settler of color-Settler; human-nonhuman-land/sea) if we are to truly enact a decolonial praxis to dismantle the U.S. settler state sustained by (anti-Black) White supremacy.[8] This means, we must take into consideration our context, as Goodyear-Ka'opua (2013) discusses about Hawai'i's charter school laws (9). If charter schools are primarily being used as a means to dismantle public schooling and spaces in Oklahoma, and tribal nations choose to pursue a charter school, we are then implicated in reproducing settler colonial, neoliberal reforms. For these movements of transformative resistance in regards to education, government, police brutality, and land/environment to dismantle the current settler, neoliberal structures and institutions, we must center Indigenous conceptions of relationality—which allows us to understand accountability (as obligations to) and community building from vastly different perspectives most often engaged in the realms of social movements, activism, and organizing.

As mentioned previously, many past and present social movements have co-opted, appropriated and erased Indigenous existence and land claims due largely to the fact that the majority of these social movements have rarely been conceptualized outside a Western, liberal/liberatory framework in which Native peoples are assumed to no longer exist. Settler colonialism was founded upon, shaped, and maintained by same underpinnings of these frameworks, so we must question how transformative these

[8] Further examined in Grande (2015) on page 47.

frameworks are in addressing the ongoing colonization of Indigenous and other marginalized peoples within (and outside) the U.S. settler/imperial state. Building upon Leigh Patel's (2016) call for a "[pause or] moratorium on social justice" (88) and I would also add multiculturalism, we must interrogate how these theories and tools of change reinstitute settler logics and sustain the structure of settler colonialism.

As a theory grounded in the actions and experiences of the Black Civil Rights movement, multiculturalism (and ultimately social justice) advocates for a politics of inclusion within the (neo)liberal democratic (settler) state as a means to address and redress inequity in regards to systemic racism and oppression (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013). Similarly, Dian Million (2013) explores how the push for human rights in Canada ends up repressing Indigenous demands, especially due to its obsession with reconciliation. In a moment where the Canadian settler state is imposing commissions and establishments in the name of reconciliation, settler reconciliation "asks for a reconciliation between a victim and a perpetrator in the same moment that any actual political power for Canadian Indigenous peoples is continuously deferred to a future self-healing from capitalism's present and ongoing violence" (12). In Canada—another settler state that has adopted multiculturalism as a national policy—human rights and reconciliation movements have been enacted in a similar fashion as civil rights, multiculturalism, and diversity initiatives as means of inclusion for the betterment and "progress" of (settler) society and democracy.[9] Reconciliation and social justice is not primarily concerned with material action in regards to dismantling settler colonialism, but

[9] See further discussions of "e pluribus unum" in social studies education.

rather work as procedures to absolve settler guilt without having to address (or prevent) future violence and colonization.

Yet, if advocating for inclusion and equity, what normative subjectivity is recentered in this process? Patel (2016) questions, "Inclusion in what and on what terms? Equitable in terms of what? Access to land? Land as property, as resource, as teacher, as parent, as child?" (89). She continues,

> Without the direct engagement of the connections across entities set asunder and dispossessed by settler colonialism, the anthropocentric liberal humanism found in much of social justice reseats certain settler logics, with the far reach of justice being a subject of the state, at best a better treated subject of the state (89).

Patel's interrogation exposes the normalized settler logics, that without a critical engagement of Indigenous epistemologies/ontologies and/or settler colonialism, would continue to go unnoticed, erased by the settler multicultural calls for justice, just as was desired for the Indigenous peoples of these lands. We must understand what these theories of change are accomplishing in terms of inclusive liberation and continuous colonization. These theories should not be dismissed, but their limitations need to be exposed to fully understand their use in engaging further with anti-colonial theories and pedagogies.

THE NEED FOR (INDIGENOUS) ANTI- AND DE-COLONIAL THEORIES IN EDUCATION

"Multiculturalism," "Social Justice," "Solidarity" has become common buzzwords within the realm of education--in schools, professional development, or university education courses. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2004) succinctly put, "Multicultural has made it to Main Street" (50). In the sentence before this, Ladson-

Billings (2004) describes "the ease with which a major newspaper used the term multicultural tells us something about how power and domination appropriate event the most marginal voices" (50). This is the settler colonial structure that hounds us, appropriates us, attempts to eliminate us, and now decolonization "has made it to Main Street." Within the structures of settler colonialism there is not only a need to appropriate, but domesticate--domesticate the land, our bodies, our knowledge--to allow for settler futurities (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Alyosha Goldstein in response to Sandy Grande's (2015) first chapter in *Red Pedagogy* reminds us,

> …as *settler colonialism* and *decolonization* are increasingly invoked by non-Indigenous scholars and activists, it becomes especially important to engage the specificity, social etymology, and complex genealogies of each term. Decolonization is not an analogy for struggles against domination in general (46).

Indigenous scholars have contributed painstaking work in examining the etymologies and genealogies of [settler] colonization, imperialism, indigeneity, sovereignty and decolonization (Barker, 2011; Byrd, 2011; Coulthard, 2007, 2014; Grande, 2015; A. Simpson, 2014b; Smith, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). These theories, particularly decolonization, cannot be appropriated or manipulated to serve projects that are not engage with decolonization as praxis in regards to all relationships structured by settler colonialism (principally relationships to land as property). Thus, the need to delineate anti- and de-colonial theories and action becomes necessary.

Patel (2014) explains, "anticolonial...does not include in its semantic shape the unmet promises of stripping away colonization, as the term *decolonization* gestures to do. This, in itself, marks anticolonial stances as incomplete, as they don't necessarily address

material change" (360). An anticolonial approach allows for us to inquire and reflect on the underpinning of settler colonialism—"the epistemological and ontological projects of coloniality"—and our relationships within, among, through, and to coloniality because no one is irreproachable within the pervasive structures of settler colonialism and white supremacy (Calderon, in press, as quoted in Patel, 2014: 360). Anticolonial engagement is needed to pause and reflect to understand the complexities and intricacies of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and currently neoliberalism—the ways in which these structures and institutions impact our lives, relationships (among each other and other living beings), subjectivities—because context matters, but it also shifts and transitions.

> Decolonization is not equivocal to other anti-colonial struggles. It is incommensurable (Tuck & Yang, 2012: 31)
>
> If we are serious about decolonizing our political systems and governance, we must be prepared to blatantly reject the colonizers's view of our knowledge and we must embrace strategies based on our own distinctive Indigenous intellectual traditions (L.Simpson, 2008: 76).

When we look to theories of decolonization, we look everywhere but here. We turn to Fanon or Said, Spivak or Babba, whose theories of de/post-colonization are provocative, beautiful, restorative, but also exist in various contexts, except here, specifically addressing settler colonialism on Turtle Island. The Indian is topic post-colonial studies steer clear from (Byrd, 2011), but the Indigenous nations here in North and South America and in the Pacific have been waging a decolonial struggle for more than 500 years (L. Simpson, 2011). "*'Decolonization' (like democracy) is neither achievable nor definable, rendering it ephemeral as a goal, but perpetual as a process*" (Grande, 2015: 234, italics in the original). Decolonization is not a Western-based theory

or inquiry, it is a process that must enacted and lived, that has always been in action and living on and in these lands (Grande, 2015; L. Simpson, 2011).

Leanne Simpson (2014) reminds us "the land must once again *become* the pedagogy" (14) because Indigenous Knowledge (IK) provides us decolonial possibilities and futuries (L. Simpson, 2008, 2011, 2014; Saranillio, 2014, 2015). Saranillio (2014) conceptualizes,

> …by taking subjugated indigenous knowledges seriously, expanding on a concern with the governance of human bodies to include bodies of land and water, delicate ecosystems, and other life forms necessary to the conditions that sustain life…such possibilities serve as the foundation for the materialization of an alternative way of life to the settler state that would radically challenge the current system (p. 258).

Before addressing the importance of land in Indigenous epistemologies, we must critically explore what learning and pedagogy are, despite what they have been framed as under neoliberal policies. Despite what has occurred due to school reforms, high stakes testing, and standardized curriculum, schooling and learning are not interchangeable terms (Patel, 2016). Patel (2016) specifies, "learning is fundamentally about transform. It is coming into being and constantly altering that being; it is subjective and often a messy act...Coming into being is in essence about being-in-relation (76). And "Pedagogy is more than simply the act of teaching; it too is an active and critical engagement with the world. Thus, teaching and learning are coterminous; one cannot truly engage in teaching without also being a learner" (Brayboy & McCarty, 2010: 192). Learning, teachers, and pedagogy have always existed and been engaged within Indigenous communities long

before Europeans arrived (Grande, 2015; L. Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2012). Yet, instead of learning being something reserved for classrooms and books, learning was relational.

To understand how Indigenous Knowledge and learning was relational, one must turn to the role and structure of our stories and epistemologies. Sarah Hunt (2014) writes,

> "Looking to Indigenous epistemologies for ways to get beyond the ontological limit of what is legible as Western scholarship, a number of Indigenous scholars have pointed to stories, art, and metaphor as important transmitters of Indigenous knowledge. Stories and story-telling are widely acknowledged as culturally nuanced ways of knowing, produced with networks of relational meaning-making" (27).

Leanne Simpson (2014) tells the story of *Kwezens* and how the *Neshnabek* learned how to harvest maple syrup. *Kwezens* watched a squirrel nibble on a tree and then sucking on the tree. *Kwezens* reenacts what the squirrel is doing and finds that there is something liquidity and sweet in the tree, then *Kwezens* decides to make a little slide and container from her surroundings so she can take the sweetwater home to her mother. Simpson's (2014) retelling of the story of *Kwezens* and maple syrup is a simple reminder of how learning is transformative and relational—relations built not just between humans, but also between humans, animals, and the land.

I choose not to report back to the academy everything that was learned and discussed due to the exploitative relationships and histories that exist between Indigenous communities and the university (Deloria, 1969; Grande, 2015; Smith, 2012). I turn to Leanne Simpson (*Nishnaabeg*) and Audra Simpson (*Kahnawake Mohawk)* for their theorizing and negotiations as (public) scholar, community member, family member, and activist. I engage an ethnographic refusal to institute limits of what the academy may

have access to, to use, expose, and exploit. This project was specifically created and driven by community discussions and aspirations, but that also means that I am obligated and answerable to the communities and nations involved (Patel, 2016). I invoke an ethnographic refusal,

> Rather, it [ethnographic refusal] is an argument that to think and write about sovereignty is to think very seriously about needs and that, basically, it involves an ethnographic calculus of what you need to know and what I refuse to write...Rather, the deep context of dispossession, of containment, of a skewed authoritative axis and the ongoing structure of both settler colonialism and its disavowal make writing and analysis a careful, complex instantiation of jurisdiction and authority...My notion of refusal articulates a mode of sovereign authority over the presentation of ethnographic data, and so does not present 'everything.' This is for the express purpose of protecting the concerns of the community, It acknowledges the asymmetrical power relations that inform research and writing about native lives and politics, and it does not *presume* that they are on equal footing with anyone...Thus this refusal and recognition of sovereignty should, I think, move us away from previous practices of discursive containment and pathology... (A. Simpson, 2014b: 105)

These refusals, my refusal, situate and reinforce these tribal communities and nations inherent sovereignty to their knowledge, lands, languages, and peoples. It is also important to understand that refusal is not invoking a liberal (civil) rights discourse, but responding to relationality and answerability. Rights discourses instantiate a notion of individualism and ownership, property to be held to achieve equity and inclusion. Engaging a "rights discourse" can be seen an anti-colonial praxis within a liberal, multicultural settler state, but when we refuse rights and engage relationality, answerability, and obligations these are moves and actions towards decolonization (Grande, 2015; Patel, 2016; L. Pochedley, 2013). Just as when we refuse exploitative,

Western, all knowing, universalizing research, we as Indigenous peoples push back and unsettle settler's norming of Indigenous containment, elimination, and subordination.

Conclusion

The majority of the theories employed throughout my literature review are grounded in the work and theories of Native studies theorists. I posit that it is necessary to understand these theories to fully explore what Native children and their families are experiencing in and with schools, and throughout their every day lives as Native peoples. These frameworks allow for further examination of what it means to center "Indian" continual existence under the U.S. settler colonial state, specifically in regards to public education institutions. Not only do these concepts allow us to see the present-day experiences shaped by colonial relationships, but they also encourage us to imagine various Indigenous futures and possibilities outside of the settler state structure.

In the next section, I outline the methodologies used for this research project and my positionality as a *neshnabekwe*. In outlining the frameworks of critical Indigenous studies and settler colonialism first, one can more fully understand my approach to and with research in my personal community. Not only am I looking at Native peoples' experiences in Oklahoma public schools, but many of these people are my friends, family, co-workers, mentors, mentees. I care for these people, I have continual relationships with many of these people, and these relationships guide and structure my research—what is presented to academia, and what is not. It is because of these relationships that I employ my ethnographic refusal, but it is these relationships that

allow this research to provide something that is hopefully helpful, mutually beneficial to these communities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The data was produced from a qualitative study investigating the need for a community, Native-controlled school in Central Oklahoma. The study focused on three counties in Central Oklahoma--Pottawatomie, Seminole, and Cleveland Counties--which are home to five Native American nations with several other Native nations bordering these counties. The central questions of the research are what are Native American participants' past and current experiences with public schools in Oklahoma?, Is there a need for a intertribal controlled school?, and, What do the community participants imagine this school to implement and accomplish to serve the needs of the diverse Native community of Pottawatomie County (and surrounding tribal jurisdictional areas)? Many of the public schools in these counties have high Native American student populations ranging from twenty to fifty percent of the student population, but very few schools have a strong infrastructure that support Native American students and their families. The only two options in these counties are to send Native American students to public schools or to Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools at least two hours away.

I conducted a qualitative case study focused on collecting life history interviews from elders, parents/caregivers, educators, and community leaders to gather their experiences with public and BIA-run schools and their views of what a culturally and community appropriate school would need to look like to support the large intertribal Native community (and individual Native nations and communities) in Central Oklahoma. This study also examined the role of tribal sovereignty and the need to expand

notions of tribal sovereignty in Oklahoma to include the right to self-educate Native nations' youth (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Typically when tribal sovereignty is discussed, topics such as land rights, economic development, tribal enrollment practices, and government structures are the most common, and educational sovereignty, a concept tied to all of these practical implications of sovereignty, is left out of the conversation. Later in this chapter there will be a more thorough examination of tribal sovereignty, particularly how it is a form of "empowerment" dictated by the settler state. Settler dictated tribal sovereignty can become very limiting due to what is permissible. In the 1970s after the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, there were tribal schools that were opened and BIE schools administration was shifted towards more tribal nation control. Yet, this did not occur nearly as much in Oklahoma as it did in other regions, such as the Southwest, Northern Plains, and the Northern Midwest. There are currently only five BIE schools in Oklahoma, and two tribally controlled schools. Little research has addressed why this has occurred, but it could be speculated due to allotment policies' deleterious effects, such as creating "checker board" reservations, it has prevented the creation of tribal schools in these areas.

A qualitative study provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of these Native communities within terms they understand and can control (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative study is more productive than presenting quantitative knowledge because until recently Native Americans have been labeled as statistically irrelevant populations (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). Many quantitative studies have typically been used to

"expose" damaging aspects of Native American communities—such a student dropout, suicide, and substance abuse rates--thus perpetuating many negative stereotypes. Also, due to the scientific, quantifiable nature of quantitative studies, these studies can reaffirm settler colonial structures and norms in their efforts to enumerate, contain, and objectify people. A qualitative study engaging Indigenous research methods provides a deeper, nuanced understanding and examples of how Native peoples perceive and contemplate the role of public schools and their relationships with Native communities. Due to Native communities complicated relationships with research and universities, all participants were given the option to either use their name or choose a pseudonym (Chilisa, 2011; Smith, 2012). All participants selected to use their real names for this project, and these choices were significant due to the erasure of Indigenous knowledge-holders that has and continues to occur by academy (Smith, 2012; Patel, 2016). This approach allowed me to work collectively with my community to produce research with local Native Nations with implications for the larger Native American community.

I conducted a "purposeful sampling" by selecting respected community elders, educators, parents, and community leaders to participate in this study (Merriam, 1998: 61). The "snowball sampling" method was also used to identify other participants that I may not have known previously (Merriam, 1998: 63). By having participants and other community members help identify possible participants allowed for a broader and more representative group of participants of the larger intertribal community of Central Oklahoma. Around thirty adults were interviewed for this study, but only nine participants' interviews were used for the final thesis. All research and findings will be

given to the community after the completion of the project, so they are able to move forward with any educational plans for the intertribal Native community of Pottawatomie County. A copy of my thesis will be provided to all five Tribal Nations involved, as well as all the participants receiving a hard or digital copy.

One of the limitations of the study was the inability to include youth voices due to time constraints and the IRB's positioning of children as vulnerable subjects. Throughout the interviewing process, participants continually stressed the importance of hearing and valuing youth opinions about their education experience and what they need. When discussing the question of who needed to be involved in creating a Native-controlled school, students and parents were at the top of most people's list. When first contacting a parent about my research, one of her first questions for me was how I was involving youth in the project because they were the ones who were going to be most affected (Mom 1, personal communication, 2016). It is important to understand that within Native communities, children occupy different roles than children in Anglo, western communities. Children are treated as autonomous peoples who are able to understand their experiences, learn from them, and make decisions that they deem best for themselves and others. They are not treated as if they do not have any knowledge or experience, but rather as a child they have a different perspective of the world, and that perspective most be honored and respected by adults and elders. As the project moves forward as a community project (rather than an academic research project), it will be absolutely necessary to include children's voices about their current education experiences and if they feel there is a need for a Native-controlled school and what the

school will need to provide for them to learn, grow, and succeed in both worlds they live within.

As a *neshnabekwe*, a Potawatomi/Native American woman, I bring a particular critical Indigenous understanding/perspective to my research and work with the Native communities in Central Oklahoma. I have lived on and off in the Native community for five years, working primarily in youth programs and local schools. During the fall of 2015, I was a student teacher in one of the larger rural schools in Pottawatomie County. Many of my students were Native students I had previously worked with in tribal youth programs previous summers. I have maintained many of the relationships I developed with my co-workers and youth participants. I participate in many of the Native community events in the area, including powwows, ceremonies, social stomp dances, and other events. I currently work for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation as their Cultural Education Specialist, a position that is focused on addressing the needs of the rural, isolated community schools of south Pottawatomie County. Although I grew up in Kent, Ohio, I have slowly become a member of the central Oklahoma community. Oklahoma has become my home away from school due to many of my friends and family who live there. The fact remains I did not go to school in Oklahoma, and I can only personally speak about the experiences of going to public school and the denials of indigeneity I faced. These experiences have provided me an "insider" and "outsider" perspective (Merriam et al., 2001). While at times these positions have been difficult to navigate, particularly in the ways that they can snap back and forth in the matter of seconds, I do believe my research has provided me with opportunities to build stronger relationships

with community members living outside of the Shawnee/Tecumseh area and those from other tribal nations.

My qualitative case study was conducted over the course of the spring semester of 2016. At the beginning of the study, many of the interviews and questions attempted to evaluate the community's need for a Native-controlled school. However, it quickly became apparent that many participants felt that there was a need to first address issues of tribal sovereignty, intertribal politics, the state and national imposition of "school reform," and community building and healing. Each participant went through one life history, semi-structured, digitally recorded interview with and an informal follow up interview if necessary to gather the data for the qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Artifacts, such as scrap paper from participants, mission statements, curricula, and program objectives, were gathered, as well. The interview questions focused on Native experiences in and with Oklahoma public schools, if there was a need for a Native-controlled school, and if so, what would the school need to provide.

I manually coded transcripts of interviews and analyzed them as Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2013) suggest by noting patterns and themes, arriving at comparisons and contrasts, and determining conceptual explanations of the case studies. For example, the issue of tribal sovereignty (and its limits in Oklahoma) was addressed in every single interview. Additionally, the role and importance of rural schools as community schools in Oklahoma was another consistently common theme from the participants' life histories. My qualitative data, collected by interviews, observations, and artifacts, allowed for the analysis of Native Americans' experiences with and in schools, particularly how the

school remains as one of the most colonizing institutions in the U.S. for Native Americans. This triangulation has provided me with confidence in asserting the following claims and themes. All of the themes surfaced from various data sources that were collected for the study, providing sufficient evidence for the themes and findings.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND HOW FAR DOES IT EXTEND?

Tribal sovereignty—what is it and what does it do? Everyone struggles with how to define tribal sovereignty, and even if it is the right term to use, but as Native Americans it impacts our lives daily, even if we know very little about it. To understand our current experiences we must explore the frameworks of tribal sovereignty, and the ways in which sovereignty is enacted on the ground. Barker (2005) articulates "following World War II, sovereignty emerge[s] not as a new but a particularly valued term within indigenous discourses to signify a multiplicity of legal and social rights to political, economic, and cultural [Indigenous] self-determination" (1). It is a foreign term and, later, a discourse that becomes "normalized" and internalized within Native communities and their nations (Alfred, 1999, 2005a). Within Native American Studies and our communities, the discourse and practice of tribal sovereignty is continuously deconstructed, challenged, and reconstructed. Tribal sovereignty is a "gift" granted to us by the United States government after centuries of genocidal policies, but this "gift" remains one of the most insidious settler colonial policies. We may govern ourselves (only) following the guidelines and format of the federal American democratic government. Instead of our Indigenous struggles for nationhood being expressed as an international human rights issue, it becomes a "domestic civil rights issue" and a struggle for equality (Fujikane, 2000: xx).

In some way the topic of tribal sovereignty was addressed throughout all the interviews and conversations during this project. Though Tonia's statement remained the most poignant,

> "…we really don't have it [tribal sovereignty], we do, but we don't. I lack a lot of knowledge regarding the treaties, agreements, and compacts that are made with the government and state, so I don't know enough to say a lot. But the little bit that I have gained some knowledge on… wow, we don't have…it just depends on the situation. I guess if we were completely sovereign things would be different, but we're not. So we still have to abide by and go by what the federal government says and their rules. But that's me, but from the little tidbits I know, it's just, wow, we're really not, and I've seen some tribes totally fight it and like ' no we're a sovereign nation and we're not going to' and a lot of them lose" (interview, 2016)

Though Tonia does not address it explicitly, she is exploring the limitations of tribal sovereignty and the wardship status that Native nations occupy as domestic dependent nations, or what Deloria & Lytle (1984) term as "nations within." Lomawaima (2013) examines the mutuality of the settler concepts of "citizen-but-ward" and "sovereign-but-domestic dependent," and how the mutuality of these concepts serves to create an ambiguous status for Native nations and peoples as a means of settler control of "indianness," Native peoples, and nations. As seen in the early 1900's, U.S. citizenship for Native Americans appeared to be the only choice to escape their wardship status, steeped in poverty and little communal/tribal autonomy, and today, this continues as seen in Tonia's statement, because "contemporary settler-colonial conceptions of sovereignty made the choice for Native nations between domestic dependent nations or nothing at all appear inescapable, nation, and the only choice possible" (Lomawaima, 2013: 334). These are the parameters that many Oklahoma tribal nations are forced and have

embraced operating within, particularly in regards to those who occupy elected positions, as many officials were coming of age in the 1960s and 70s with the passage of the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, the 1972 Indian Education Act, and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975.

Tribal sovereignty has become a buzzword of sorts, a commonly used term within certain (privileged) Native circles, particularly within the realms of academia and government. While facilitating a workshop on tribal sovereignty with Native youth in central Oklahoma, it became apparent almost immediately that few had even heard of the term or knew its importance (L. Pochedley, 2014). While the students did not know the specific term, they did understand the material outcomes of tribal sovereignty and treaty obligations, such as receiving "commods," having a tribal ID card, tribal police, and casinos. Although many in Oklahoma, Native and non-Native, forget that because of tribal sovereignty and treaty obligations, we receive these "special privileges." Chief Harjo elaborates,

> "I'm told…that there are still parts of the state in Oklahoma…[some] are taught that all Indians get a federal government check…there [are] misconceptions that are perpetuated, there's a lot of misunderstanding of…there's a common belief in the general population that we don't pay taxes…That type of misunderstanding leads to the perception of benefit that other groups of American citizens do not get…" (interview, 2016).

While tribal sovereignty is embedded in the landscape of Oklahoma, particularly Central Oklahoma[10], the concept is rarely discussed or taught within many of the rural public schools serving these Native communities. These misconceptions perpetuate many racist,

[10] See pictures of tribal jurisdictional signs in appendix

anti-Indian beliefs that lead to anti-Indian state and city policies, but at a local, community level within the schools it continues to contribute to the bullying and marginalization of Native students, by non-Native students, parents, teachers, coaches, and administrators. As Chief Harjo continued, these perceptions contribute to "how it plays out in everyday encounters…[it is a] contributing factor to forms of racism …[if the public school system] does not educate other people in this society to change the perception" (interview, 2016). This erasure of tribal sovereignty and Native claims to Okla humma at a local and school level is largely connected to the ways in which Oklahoma history is constructed, valorized, and taught.

While student teaching United States history at one of the larger rural high schools in Pottawatomie County, I emphasized the importance of understanding tribal sovereignty today and where it comes from. Tribal nations employed many of my students (and their family members) due to the high school's close proximity to several tribal headquarters and enterprises, so we would discuss the forms of tribal sovereignty that they saw in their everyday lives—whether it was seeing the tribal nations' flags flying, tribal police cars, or driving past the Indian Health Service (IHS) Clinics. However, the most important conversations occurred when we historically traced why these forms of tribal sovereignty existed. When teaching about Manifest Destiny, the students examined a section from the Chickasaw Removal Treaty of 1830, looking specifically at the language used in the treaty—"conveying the *country* to the Chickasaw people, and to their children, so long as they shall continue to exist as a *nation*" (Article II). The students were forced to grapple with the fact that originally Oklahoma was never

meant to be a state, but separate countries of tribal nations. An elder reflected on how her Oklahoma history classes as a sixth and tenth grader barely even acknowledged the history of Okla humma before the sooners, land runs, and statehood (Rose, interview, 2016). She joked that she learned more about Indians in Texas schools compared to Oklahoma schools with a classrooms filled with Native students. Unfortunately, things have barely changed reflected in Michael's statement, "We're kind of a couple pages at the beginning of Oklahoma history, but then after that, you know, it's everybody else but us" (interview, 2016). Despite efforts by Native teachers and educators to provide curricula and resources addressing Native histories, tribal sovereignty, and Native contributions to Oklahoma, in many of these rural communities it remains untaught.

Despite the understanding the contemporary importance of tribal sovereignty, the limitations of tribal sovereignty can also prevent the imagining of Indigenous futures, particularly in regard to Indigenous leadership and governance. Aside from having some mixed feelings about the creation of an intertribal school that will be discussed later, Alecia reflects on the importance of creating and implementing a "curriculum that is value-based—Native-value based" because "our children can learn those things—how to relate, a female-male relationship, how to respect boundaries, to also learn the relationship we have with our natural environment, our relatives not resources, our natural environment. [They need] To relearn those…we have to get those back" (interview, 2016). These Native values will be further expanded upon in later sections, but it's important to understand that Tribal Sovereignty is not a Native value; it is not rooted in how we understand relationships and governance. Alecia continues,

> What we know of tribal sovereignty now is not tribal sovereignty, it's limited, and I don't know if that any of us have really defined that—what do we picture? We hear tribal sovereignty, and what we know it as now is limited. It's kind of based on a permission thing. But what do we picture? What haven't defined that yet, or for even for ourselves, what we want for the end result… Tied into that issue of sovereignty…is teaching them traditional forms of leadership, so that one day we may be able to get back to that. Because what we are patterned after is not the best thing, and what we had was and it worked. So while it [contemporary tribal sovereignty] may engage them, but it's engaging them in something that doesn't work, so I would rather see our efforts being put into returning to traditional leadership (interview, 2016).

Alecia's reflections are indicative of the current turning away from settler colonial recognition and turning towards theories and praxis of Indigenous resurgence, seen in many Native community activist/academic circles (Alfred & Corntassel, 2008; Coulthard, 2014; A. Simpson, 2014a; L. Simpson, 2008, 2011). As she states, this "recognition," "permission" of tribal sovereignty does not work. It has allowed for some tribal economic development within the structures of a capitalist democracy, but it has not truly contributed to the betterment of our people, or as Scott Lyons (2000) refers to as "nation-peoples" rather than a nation-state.

Thus, it is important to understand the various constraints on tribal sovereignty in Oklahoma (and across the U.S.). As Tonia said, "we don't have it" (interview, 2016) due to the fact that we are forced to conform to federal guidelines and stipulations, and even state compacts that must be followed in regards to gaming. It is also fundamental to understand the constraints of tribal sovereignty that exist on the ground, throughout our everyday lives. Tribal sovereignty is ultimately a settler colonial tool that will never allow for Indigenous resurgence or futures. It remains a figurative means of containment, just as we are physically contained to operate within reservation jurisdictions of land held

in "trust" for tribal Nations by the U.S. government. Lomawaima (2013) pushes back against this notion of tribal sovereignty as the only, inevitable means for tribal nations to exist, "In the twenty-first century, Native people and nations know that we are here, and we are here to stay. What might we imagine? What might we work toward?" (344). So while a Native charter school may be an act of contemporary tribal sovereignty, we must always continue to question whose interest is it serving. As a friend always reminds me when I grow impatient, everything we do must be done with intent. When embarking on a project like this, we must reflect on all aspects of intent, impact, and outcomes of a Native-controlled school. If a school is imagined and implemented within the constraints of tribal sovereignty, we must heed Goodyear-Kaopua's (2013) words of caution that if the schools are upholding and reproducing settler colonial, neoliberal values then we must re-evaluate what we, as tribal nation(-peoples), are pursuing.

EQUALITY VS. EQUITY, BUT WHAT ABOUT SOVEREIGNTY?

"We were treated just like the white [other] kids"

Several Elders made this comment when discussing their experiences in Oklahoma public schools, most attending school sometime between the 1940s to the 1960s. While inclusion, equality, and equity remain goals within the settler, liberal, multicultural project, working within Native communities, we must interrogate what this phrase means within the context of Native America, and specifically Okla humma. As Rose reminds us, "they wanted to paint the red man white, they wanted to do that but he's not white, they found out when they tried to conquer us" (interview, 2016). Treating

Natives as "white" or "just like the other kids" in public schools is largely a part of the larger settler colonial project to eliminate the Native to assert and legitimate settler claims to Indigenous lands (Wolfe, 2006). As a move away from using the terms "equal" and "equitable" due to their rootedness within liberalism, I turn to Josephine's thoughts on relationships when assessing what is best for Native students within public schools.

Not all participants felt this way about being treated just like the other/White kids, but several of the eldest participants hinted at this experience. It's also important to note, that several of these participants also went to smaller, rural schools or schools with a much larger Native population. No one person's experience is the same with schools, and especially in working with Native communities, we cannot essentialize and universalize Native students and peoples' experiences with and in public schools. However, there are some commonalities that are necessary to examine and understand. A commonality that was addressed in the majority of the interviews was the lack of support or encouragement from teachers, administrators, and counselors for Native students pursuing further opportunities outside of high school. Rose recollects, "When they took them out for counseling week, [they only] spoke to them about vo-tech, [they] never mentioned college to them…these were bright students…and I only knew because I had been [college] tracked by other schools [outside of Oklahoma]" (interview, 2016). Josephine and Tonia, who attended the largest public school in Pottawatomie County (albeit different generations), noticed similar actions toward Native students in their school (interviews, 2016). These actions are (unfortunately) nothing new in U.S. public schools, particularly in regards to minority or marginalized children. Nevertheless, we must also

understand that Native children are also colonized subjects within these schools, so it is important to understand within this context we need to engage different concepts and theories outside of the Western, settler conceptions of access, inclusion, equality, or equity to address the issues they face in schools.

Oklahoma is home to tribal nations that have been affronted with assimilation policy after assimilation policy. Beginning with removal, a strategy that can be understood as the first assimilation policy due to uprooting tribal nations from their traditional homelands, thus disconnecting them from their stories, ceremonies, clans, and fellow communities and nations (L. Pochedley, 2013). It then continued with the rise of mission schools (i.e., Sacred Heart Mission) and then larger scale boarding schools, such as Chilocco and Haskell. To ensure that assimilationist policies applied throughout Native peoples' lives, policies of allotment were attempted and then implemented. Due to allotment, Indian Territory was all but lost through "lawful" means to pave the way to Oklahoma statehood. As the famous Colonel Pratt statement reminds us, these policies were to "Kill the Indian, and save the man" (Pratt, 1892). To return to Rose's phrase, "paint the red man white," we must remember the ways in which racial logics are employed in regards to Native peoples in North America. Working in opposition to the "one drop rule," according to settler racial logics if a Native was not a "full-blood," or as seen on some Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) cards—4/4, then a Native was no longer authentically or legitimately Native. While the goal was to paint the red man white, they were not supposed to be "too white," due to these settler assimilationist

policies Natives were forced to occupy an inferior position of no longer "authentically" Native (according to settler logics), but never White either.

While I understand that there are some overlapping ideas between multicultural theories invoking equality and equity and Indigenous theories of relationality, but there still needs to be a distinction drawn between these theories due to the systems of thought they are grounded within. When Josephine introduced herself when we first began the interview, she made sure to give her English and *neshnabe* name, and then continued to identify her clan. She explained that it was important for her to do this because she was always taught to "brag" on her clan, to identify her relationships to the humans and non-humans around her. These are the same relationships that Alecia mentions, as well, relationships that are rooted in our values, stories, languages, epistemologies, and ontologies. Alecia refers to it as "how to relate…[treating humans and non-humans alike as] our relatives not resources" (interview, 2016). Raised traditionally Josephine was taught to honor all of these relationships, and the notions of equality and equity cannot capture these teachings of honoring relationships through respect, responsibility, and renewal (L. Simpson, 2008; Stark, 2010). Josephine further explains what she believes helps Native students,

> I was thinking what could help Native American students do better, and it's that positive interaction that you get from your instructor… you highlight what they do best, you encourage them…you're giving positive strokes… I think it all boils down to how you treat people, how you encourage people… For me, I thought, what helped me to go on to school, it was coming in contact with people who said you can do it! (interview, 2016)

I will return to these notions of honoring relationships as forms of treaty making in the next chapter, but one cannot separate Josephine's discussions of positive interaction and encouragement from the way she introduced herself. In her introduction she grounds herself—she lets us know where she comes from, whom she learned from, and what guides her throughout her life and her interactions. While equality and equity can be useful concepts within the realm of education for non-Native children, they still reflect aspirations for inclusion within a nation-state.

It's important to understand the limitations of contemporary tribal sovereignty as existing as something imposed by the settler state, but it is a concept that still allows us to understand the unique status of Native people within the U.S. settler state. Lomawaima (2013) helps us work through the mutuality of these concepts, "citizens-but-wards" and "sovereign-but-domestic dependent" and the ways in which they work to govern, limit, and contain Native peoples and nations. When we work within the rhetoric of equal and equitable, it perpetuates the settler nation's need for Indigenous erasure, the narrative of [multicultural] progress, and liberation framed within Western concepts and on the settler's terms. It is important for us to interrogate these limitations to also allow us to dream and envision futures outside of these structures, theories, and frameworks, but we also cannot forget we still continue at the moment to exist within the system. This can be seen in Alecia's considerations on the impact of systemic racism in schools and whether or not a Native-controlled school is the best choice for the community and place we live in.

> But at the same time, on the other token, if we were to leave those schools, it will never change for sure…and it [public schools] will continue to have even less exposure to us and it will continue to get worse. You know, who knows what could be taught at that point? And so I'm torn, I'm really torn on that because on one hand it's kind of sad we have to leave our kids in there and they continue to be exposed to this oppression that's in there, but on the other hand if we leave…the segregation of that would probably further that disconnect from each other just as even human beings (interview, 2016).

Yet, fundamentally, Alecia is not arguing that we leave our Native students in the Oklahoma public school system for inclusive and equitable reasons, but rather it is about being able to build and heal relationships between Native and non-Native peoples because it is a reality that we all live here now. While this quote recognizes the limitations of the present, it also exemplifies possibilities of an Indigenous future (outside of tribal sovereignty).

Many of Alecia's comments reflected this sentiment, which is more largely representative of Indigenous notions of treaty making and relationship building (L. Simpson, 2008, 2011; Stark, 2010). As it will be further explored in the fourth chapter, Leanne Simpson (2011) provides examples of past treaties between tribal nations, such as the Anishinaabe with the Haudenosaunee, or the Anishinaabe and the Dakota. These nation-to-nation agreements exemplify that we must all live together and share, specifically for our mutual benefit. Thus, our actions must reflect and uphold this mutual beneficence. Tribal sovereignty, as defined by settler parameters, allows us to justify the need for a charter school and can lead us to believe that a charter school is in our best interest as individual tribal nations (or several tribal nations). However, if we truly take

indigenizing/decolonizing as a means of Indigenous resurgence seriously, we must ask ourselves the hard questions and confront the difficult topics.

> I'm torn on that because I can see the benefits of a [Native] charter school, but on the other hand there's that part of how it effects everyone overall and the funding, and where it's going, and how it's affecting everyone else, not just our kids. While sometimes, on the flipside, there's those who may not worry about how the system is set up and how its effecting our kids, but I think we have to be bigger than that and consider the larger scheme of charter schools and how it will effect the funding of everyone involved (Alecia, interview, 2016).

Alecia's comment reflects this need for encouraging relationality, as opposed to solidarity. We must begin to understand one another to work together, to really better education for all children. This visioning of the future does not depend on separating our children (or even ourselves), but rather is grounded in a much larger understanding of inter-connectedness.

RURAL SCHOOLS: THE BEDROCK OF OKLAHOMA PUBLIC EDUCATION

The importance of these rural, community school districts was continuously present in many of the interviews because everyone interviewed had at one time gone to school in Pottawatomie, Seminole, or Cleveland County. Growing up I had always heard my grandpa tell stories of his school days in Kansas—walking long distances to go to the one room schoolhouse in town. Where I had grown up and gone to school in Ohio, my high school had been considered relatively small for the area with about 1300-1400 students. It was not until college that I had ever met someone who graduated with a class of 50 students or less. At the time, I could barely even imagine what that was like since for most of my life I had considered my school to be relatively small. I remember my first

summer in Oklahoma; I worked with a boy from one of the small, rural school districts of Pottawatomie County. I remember he told me, he graduated with 9 other students, and I did not even know what to say. Yet, as I kept returning to Oklahoma and meeting more and more people, I found out how common it was to have attended one of these small, rural schools at some point in one's life. I also grew to learn how important these schools were to the small communities throughout the three counties. These schools were the bedrock of public education in Oklahoma for decades, only lately to be dismissed, defunded, and slowly forgotten.

The two largest school districts in Pottawatomie County commonly had teachers, staff, and administrators commute from larger towns and suburbs, such as Norman and Moore. Many of the smaller school districts had more of a mix of teachers—teachers who had been born and raised in the community, teachers who had chosen to move there due to teaching there, and some teachers that also commuted in (Michael, interview, 2016). I saw some of the struggles that occurred in the school that I student taught in because teachers did not nor had they ever lived in the community—they did not know the people in the community outside of those who felt comfortable (and privileged) enough to frequent the school. Small rural schools gave many students, including Native, marginalized, and/or poor students, opportunities that they would have never been able to pursue or accomplish in a larger school context. When discussing whether or not there was a need for a tribal school, Chief Harjo explained the importance of the small, rural schools,

> The reason is in the smaller school systems, the kids who attend the smaller systems who are Seminole or other Native Americans—have the opportunity to be valedictorian, they have the opportunity to be on the basketball team, they have the opportunity to succeed. That in Seminole [Public Schools] they may not get because…of some of the income issues, or the simple fact there's only 12 positions on a basketball team…and not everyone can be that person, not everyone can be valedictorian…without the opportunity to succeed on that level, a lot of our kids will not…It's just the sheer numbers, the size of the school, there's going to be students who fall by the wayside because they do not feel they have the chance to be visible, or get the support they need (interview, 2016).

Seminole High School that Chief Harjo refers to is also a larger school (if not the largest school district in Seminole County) serving about 600-700 students. In these schools, it is too common for Native students to slip through the cracks, especially if they are not strong (or recognized) athletes, honor students, or come from families with a higher socioeconomic status. For a long time rural schools were able to give the students and their families the support they needed. Furthermore, since more students were able to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, students were able to have more interaction with school teachers and staff providing more opportunities to establish and grow relationships.

While rural schools in Oklahoma did not always receive the most funding throughout all the school districts, for a long time they did receive support from the state legislature. Chief Harjo illustrates,

> …for generations we have been able to maintain rural schools, like Justice and Sasakwa, all these little schools because majority of the legislator was from rural Oklahoma. Well, about 10 years ago that changed, they majority of the legislator is now from urban Oklahoma. And while they haven't enforced it, and I'm surprised they haven't enforced it due to the shortfall in revenue, they've offered incentives, and so there has been a lot of consolidation (interview, 2016).

Oklahoma's economy has been shrinking and failing for several decades now due to the oil boom, and then bust, of the mid-twentieth century. Many people relied on family farms and other agricultural jobs in some of these rural areas (Kay, interview, 2016) for several decades afterwards. However, in the last 10-20 years, many of the leading employers (outside of government and city jobs like at Tinker Airforce Base) have been tribal nations, such as the Chickasaw Nation around Ada, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation around Shawnee, and the Cherokee Nation around Tahlequah. As tribal nations have gained more economic weight and power, relationships with the state of Oklahoma and some larger towns has become more difficult due to the overall economy's continuous shrinking. Tribal nations, such as the Chickasaw Nation, have a larger overall budget than the state of Oklahoma (Mize, 2012). Due to the lack of access to additional revenue and the rise and implementation of neoliberal policies, particularly under the leadership of Governor Mary Fallin, urban and isolated rural schools have been the most largely impacted by defunding and threats of consolidation. While some tribal nations may have the resources to fund or control their own public schools within their jurisdiction, this has rarely occurred outside of some BIE schools and immersion schools in Oklahoma.

There is a very little contemporary work on the role and impact of rural schools within heterogeneous communities, like those found throughout central Oklahoma, but also there has been very little analysis of the impact of neoliberal, school "reform" policies in rural areas. I believe it has taken a longer time to affect these schools, especially since many of the government officials had been raised and educated in rural school settings. However, neoliberal school reform policies have begun to greatly affect

these schools in detrimental, damaging ways. Several schools have opted to move to four day school weeks as a means to save funds, other schools are applying for or operating under School Improvement Grants (SIG) program, and many schools being financially unable to hire new teachers while having administrators, counselors, and other staff take on teaching loads (Rayne, KOCO, May 2016). When reflecting on his experiences with schools, Leander recollects,

> I really enjoyed going to school here. We had more teachers back then, more aides back then. The way it is now, there's not that many aides helping the teachers. Maybe because of the budget cuts…Back then I feel like we learned a lot more… I always remember having Native aides here…because they were always hired through Title VII… [it helped having Native aides]…[with the students and families] back then you always knew them or they might have been family, so it was always easier to go talk to them than a teacher that you didn't really know… (interview, 2016).

There are relatively few Native American teachers in many of these public schools, despite many of these schools having large Native populations (ranging from 25-60% of the student population). Aside from the shortage of Native teachers, there are many Native educators and staff at these small rural schools—serving as JOM counselors, Title VII/Indian Education Coordinators, classroom aides, substitutes, bus drivers, lunch ladies, janitors, et cetera (observation, Fall Semester 2015). Due to the involvement (and employment) of many Native community members, many of these small rural schools have been able to support Native students and their families and have operated as schools largely community controlled and responsive.

Konawa, where Leander serves as the JOM counselor and Title VII coordinator, has been one of the most successful schools, in regards to supporting Native and non-

Native students alike by working with the larger community of Konawa. Leander explains that what has helped Konawa the most is "a lot of parent involvement…good parent involvement, and just working together and with Administration…" (interview, 2016). A group of parents had come together about a decade ago, and truly worked to mobilize the Konawa Native community by involving parents and families in the process of growing the Johnson O'Malley (JOM) Program and later Title VII. Leander recalled moments of when several parents rode the bus to meet parents outside of the school to gather their opinions and ideas about what kind of support was needed for their children (interview, 2016). Chief Harjo echoed much of what Leander explained, that the ability of Konawa schools and parents to work in partnership has truly benefitted everyone in the community, and "the end result of that is that school district with a fairly high percentage of [Native] students…are constantly working and trying to do things for the benefit of the students" (interview, 2016).

Unfortunately, Konawa is not the norm for many local, rural schools—particularly those with smaller Native populations (Michael, interview, 2016)—and the community input and support have not been able to stop it from being affected by the top-down, state education reform/defunding policies. Nevertheless, in returning to Alecia's comments about the need of learning to live and work together to better education for all our children, Konawa provides a stronger example of what the start of that process can look like. The lengths to which the Konawa community and administration went to build relationships between the Native community, the larger community, and the school show how fundamental and dynamic this process must be. While these actions were not taken

under the mantle of (settler) tribal sovereignty, it was Indigenous sovereignty in action by a Native community, typically forgotten by the tribal governments thirty plus miles away.

Reflections

When completing my fieldwork it seemed like my interviews came in waves, so in some ways my mind began to group interviews in each wave together. After my first group of interviews, what I had not foreseen was the loyalty that many of these people—their families and children included—had to these rural public schools. Multiple generations had either attended these schools or lived in these communities. Some of these families had lived there dating back to before statehood and allotment. While many of these schools do not provide the resources or administrative support these Native families need, these families are still not ready to give up on these schools because of the deep relationships they have built with these schools and communities. These relationships exist in tension with each other, but the fact of the matter is they still exist. Circe Sturm (2002) analyzes these relationships and affiliations that Cherokees have built upon traditional values to colonial structures, such as the Baptist church. While these institutions are not "traditionally" Native, they still have served in some way, as a place and space to communally gather and maintain traditions, specifically language (through hymns and sermons) for many Indian churches in Oklahoma. Natives have incorporated and appropriated these structures into their daily lives—many times in order to cope, to survive, to begin to heal.

I posit that the school is very much like the church for Native peoples because even though these establishments are not grounded in Native values, epistemologies, or ontologies, they have had to engage with, build relationships with these non-Native community schools. Due to the relationships that are continually built in these communities and the desires to see these schools survive and thrive, I turn to relationship building in my last chapter. While tribal officials and many Native educators supported the possibility of a school, many parents, elders, and other community members were wary of the possibility. Many times, these are the people who deal with public schools on a daily basis, so we need to listen to them, really hear what they are saying.

They have built relationships with schools, many times deep relationships that preserve Native values. So we must understand how these relationships work and what we can do to truly strengthen them. We need to create new relationships and re/envision possibilities that allow for Native students to succeed alongside their non-Native peers in public institutions that never meant for them to excel as grounded and connected Native peoples. This is not necessarily a call to action to change the system from within, but more so to heed Alicia's words, "it's the system that is oppressive and was made that way for a purpose… for a real change to happen we have to talk about school reform, the reform really needs to be in the curriculum" (interview, 2016) and I would argue reform that needs to (re)vision curricular and institutional possibilities outside of the settler state.

CHAPTER 5: (RE/EN)VISIONING RELATIONALITY IN THE AGE OF #ACTIVISM

We live in an era of abstraction and disconnection, largely due to the rise of neoliberalism structuring our lives, experiences, and worldviews. We are taught that freedom is the freedom of choice according to the "liberated" individual, and more specifically the individual's freedom to consume. As market-driven policies are adapted and enacted within public spaces, we are further alienated from building authentic relationships with each other, nonhumans, and the land. Returning to Alecia's remark about the danger of creating a Native school in the area,

> "If we were to leave those schools, it will never change for sure…and it [public schools] will continue to have even less exposure to us and it will continue to get worse. You know who knows what could be taught at that point? And so I'm torn, I'm really torn on that because on one hand it's kind of sad we have to leave our kids in there and they continue to be exposed to this oppression that's in there, but on the other hand if we leave…the segregation of that would probably further that disconnect from each other just as even human beings." (interview, 2016).

Due to the structures of settler colonialism, U.S. imperialism, and neoliberalism, many people (including Native Americans in Oklahoma) have not been taught how to live their lives structured by relationships, specifically in regards to respect, responsibility, and renewal (Stark, 2010). The activism and organizing that has reached the mainstream also fail to reflect these values, teachings, and ways of being.

It is important to understand the differences between activism, community/grassroots organizing, social movements, and Indigenous resurgence. Astra Taylor (2016) engages Jonathan Matthew Smucker's argument from his forthcoming book,

> …the term *activist* is suspiciously devoid of content. "Labels are certainly not new to collective political action," Smucker writes, pointing to classifications like *abolitionist*, *populist*, *suffragette*, *unionist*, and *socialist*, which all convey a clear position on an issue. But *activist* is a generic category associated with oddly specific stereotypes: today, the term signals not so much a certain set of political opinions or behaviors as a certain temperament.

The category of the activist is primarily concerned with the individual, appearances, and exclusivity because there is no specificity attached to it. Taylor (2016) succinctly summarizes that despite "notable exceptions, many strands of contemporary activism risk emphasizing the self over the collective." It has become "cool" to be an activist, particularly in relation to the rise of the "hipster" for the Generation Y. While wanting to push back against "mainstream" standards, both the "activist" and the "hipster" reproduce settler and neoliberal norms, albeit in various, shifting forms.

Harsha Walia's (2012) work questions the "politics of solidarity" particularly in regards to Native and non-Native allyship. As a local non-Native activist in Coast Salish Territories (Vancouver), she calls upon as practice of decolonization and centering Indigenous struggles within all social movements in North America, in doing so, non-Natives must understand that they are "beneficiaries of the illegal settlement of Indigenous peoples' land and unjust appropriation of Indigenous peoples' resources and jurisdiction" (Walia, 2012). However, when non-Native, settler activists confront this truth, many times they focus on their feelings of guilt, which Walia (2012) "argue[s] is a state of self-absorption that actually upholds [settler] privilege." This guilt remains largely unproductive because "it does nothing to motivate the responsibility necessary to actively dismantle entrenched systems of oppression" (Walia, 2012). Contemporary

activism is not largely engaged with community organizing and relationship building, which is essential to future anti-/de-colonial projects of Indigenous resurgence.

I reject much of the praxis of activism and social movements due to their inability to truly serve de-/anti-colonial projects of Indigenous resurgence. As previously outlined above, activism and social movements are primarily engaged within Western theorized systems of transformation, particularly within the realm of critical theory that is unable to fully embrace Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Grande, 2015). Leanne Simpson (2011) explains,

> "Social movement theory is, for the most part, inadequate in explaining the forces that generate and propel Indigenous resistance and resurgence because it is rooted in western knowledge and the Canadian state [and the U.S.] in its current expression, while most theories of group politics and social movements take the state for granted" (16).

When the state is taken for granted and transformation is contained and confined within the settler state's imaginary, transformative (or decolonial) action is treated as impossible (Saranillio, 2014). Indigenous ways of knowing and being are regulated as "impossible" for the modern world, and something of the "primitive past."

I will primarily draw upon the work of community organizing within educational contexts (Lipman and Buras), but push this work further to take seriously the calls for transformative action in terms of indigenizing, decolonizing, and Indigenous resurgence. Lipman (2011; 2013) and Buras (2012) working in Chicago and New Orleans (respectively) are engaged in the community and grassroots organizing against neoliberal education reforms, specifically addressing the charter school reform movement. First I believe it is helpful to employ Taylor's (2016) definition of organizing, "…organizing is

cooperative by definition: it aims to bring others into the fold, to build and exercise shared power…[it] is long-term and often tedious work…" that is grounded in accountability to others. While community organizing is still largely grounded in Western frameworks that uphold settler logics, I believe the general notion of community organizing can be used as an entry point to understand how new treaties and relationships have been built in the past and can be built in the current moment.

Buras (2012) approaches grassroots community organizing through the example of King Elementary School. Martin Luther King Elementary School (King Elementary School) was the only public school in the Lower 9th Ward who received a state-approved charter controlled solely by a grassroots group (the original principal, teachers, and community) after Hurricane Katrina (Buras, 2012: 28). Administrators, teachers, parents, and community members all had to come together to make this project a reality drawing on their historical, cultural, and lived space. The Louisiana Recovery School District (RSD) had no intentions of re-opening any of the public schools in the Lower 9th Ward, but the community that supported King Elementary drew upon their history of political engagement—turning towards the figures and actions of Mama Griffin, Rosana Aubert, and others—to ground their action and resistance to the current politics of dispossession (of urban, racialized space). While the engagement of property is counterintuitive to Indigenous struggles, the Lower 9th Ward community's actions reveal "an intergenerational, culturally grounded conception of 'property'," I believe this engagement can be expanded and further theorized to support current, specific Indigenous transformative movements, particularly in regards to education.

Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag [Let's Meet Up by the Water] - Call To Action
By Christy B., Kaz Clever, Knoxx with samples from Monica Lewis-Patrick's poetry[11]

[match spark to light sage]

MONICA LEWIS PATRICK:
Let me tell you something else:
If anybody has been telling you in Detroit that you are actually a conspiracy theorist,
That you really don't know what you're talking about
Well this privatization agenda that came and was birthed through emergency management
Let me connect the dots very quickly.
Guess who is privatizing the internal operations of DWSD [Detroit Water & Sewage Department]
Veolia.
Guess what also Veolia has done?
Veolia advised that Flint could drink poison water.
Guess what else Veolia has done?
Veolia has its hands in the privatization of the school bussing for the city of Detroit.
Also what else Veolia has done…
They have their hands in the M1 rail
So if you think that this is not connected to a global agenda to privatize transportation, employment, jobs, water, assets…
You have deceived yourself.

[match spark to light sage]

CHRISTY B:
Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag
Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag

KNOXX:
bruce lee told me how to be like the water
hold down the fire cuz the team go harder
i overstated this rage, cuz we gotta flip the pain
and i know its hard to explain, cuz of colonized brains
trust me
_ _i want to tear this boy down too
we fighting state violence, so come walk in these shoes
polluting the original pools of life by fools
who never studied of what to do, so humanities lose,
its trife

[11] Lyrics found at https://sknoxx.bandcamp.com/track/nakweshkodaadiidaa-ekoobiiyag-lets-meet-up-by-the-water

bring your cousin, your sister, your uncle, and your grannie
your brother, niece, nephew, momma, daddy, grandpa and auntie
thats native families, with native families
fulfilling a destiny of all my relations water walking right next to me

Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag
Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag

KAZ CLEVER:
they selling lies real quick
shoot yourself in the throat then die real quick
my analysis is that we sick
they manage us with murder sipping water from a ditch
ill admit
your tactics full of queen stealing chess moves but
436 wasn't the best move
they preach like they all for us
but u the reason that the water aint safe aw lord
i aint from flint but I'm sick too
cause my peers aint appearing in your mental
the symptoms of a lead poisoning
product caused profit to rocket the law
abolished our options so whats next...

MONICA LEWIS PATRICK POETRY:
Wow, environmental racism.
Well if you didn't know you're sitting in it.
You're sittin in it.

Detroit and Flint are the results of environmental racism by the use of the weapon of emergency management to deny voting rights,
to carve up pension funds,
to bust up unions,
to comandere public education,
to take over the public asset of DWSD,
to then carve it up and then sell it off and spend it off into the Great Lakes Water Authority,
then to decide that the people of Flint because they just poor, and they black, and they white, and they're Hispanic and Native and don't nobody give a dog.

Tell you what we going to do, then we're going to impose bond debt on you, create another system called KWA, because guess what yall.. The governor and the State attorney general have a plan after they're all out of office to create a fracking business that runs parallel to the Great Lakes Water Authority.

people versus pockets evil lurking stop it

people versus pockets evil lurking stop it
people versus pockets evil lurking stop it
people versus pockets evil lurking stop it

KNOXX:
and now its
green light, the times up
the people keep rising up
birds flock together,
so its eagles from the feathers
going deep in the river
women sing for the water
and we breathe in alotta problems
exhaling good karma

KAZ CLEVER:
iant mean to
but i know we need to
i know what this leads to
i know where the light goes they want it to leave you
i just need to speak through the speaker to reach u
we need u i know u hear the water call

people versus pockets evil lurking stop it (4x)
people versus pockets evil lurking stop it (4x)
people versus pockets evil lurking stop it (4x)
people versus pockets evil lurking stop it (4x)

Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag
Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag

MONICA LEWIS PATRICK POETRY:
But also in the city of Flint and all across Michigan,
Those women organized themselves.
We are not waiting on anyone to rescue us.
Because we are beloved,
Because we are women,
And I don't care what anybody says, yall put the word out,
Women are organizing right now to unite ourselves & put a march on this nation like they've never seen before.

Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag
Let's Meet Up by the Water way ya hey ya
Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag

INDIGENIZE, NOT DECOLONIZE

Nakweshkodaadiiidaa Ekobiiyag was released in the middle of April when several Native communities surrounding the Detroit/Flint area decided to host a water ceremony open to all Natives, Arrivants, and Settlers as a means of healing and acknowledging past and present relationships between the Black and Native communities of southeastern Michigan. As Kyle Mays (2016) states,

> The track and this ceremony are important. It represents collaboration between Black and Indigenous peoples, between Detroit and Flint. It illustrates that Native people are still alive, and that the fight for clean water—a global issue represented here at the local level—will be led by the original inhabitants of Turtle Island: Indigenous people.

Water ceremonies, practiced by Anishinaabe/Ojibwe/Chippewa, Neshnabe/Potawatomi, and Odawa (Ottawa) communities, remind us of the sacredness of *nibi* (water) because it sustains us, it is our lifeblood. While no "formal" written document was created, there will be a lasting memory and stories of this event where various peoples were able to come together and renegotiate their relationships to each other and water. Drawing on Heidi Stark's (2010) analysis of Anishinaabe past treaty making, with the animal and star nations, and the U.S. and Canada, helps make sense of the ways in which we can engage these past (present and future) forms of treaty making/relationship building today.

In both of Stark (2010) and Simpson's (2011) analyses, the long histories of Indigenous treaty-making are made explicit. Written, legal documents were not necessarily for Indigenous treaty making, but these treaties were codified into various forms, such as wampum belts and oral stories and histories. Leanne Simpson (2008, 2011) provides the example of *Gdoo-naaganinaa* (Our Dish), a treaty in regards to a

hunting territory shared by the Nishnaabeg Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Simpson (2011) further explains the relevance of the treaty today, "it sets forth the terms for taking care of a shared territory while maintaining separate, independent sovereign nations. Gdoo-naaganinaa acknowledged that both [] were eating out of the same dish…It was designed to promote peaceful coexistence and it required regular renewal of the relationship through meeting, ritual, and ceremony" (112). To emphasize this point Stark (2010) argues that respect, responsibility, and renewal are central to ways in which Anishinaabe engaged in treaty making with the U.S. and Canada. The elements of respect, responsibility, and renewal were (and continue to be) central to *Gdoo-naaganinaa* because the Nishnaabeg Nation and Haudenosaunee Confederacy engaged in continuous relationships with each other, the nonhumans within the territory, and the land to maintain peace, friendship, and mutual benefit(s).

Anishinaabe treaty making was an enforcement of Indigenous nationhood because as seen in the example of *Gdoo-naaganinaa*, although the territory was being shared between two nations, neither was forced to become dependent or inferior to the other. The nations were able to exist simultaneously on the same land because Indigenous nationhood is not tied to propertied, territorial confinements. Grande (2015) engages Lyons (2000), conceptualizing the term nation-peoples to further understand the socio-political organizing of Indigenous peoples. Land is central to understanding Indigenous nation-peoples, but Indigenous peoples engage in reciprocal relationships with the land that draw upon the concepts of respect, responsibility, and renewal. Treaties define these reciprocal relationships, and so Stark (2010) begins her article with the story, "The

woman who married a beaver." This story—an oral treaty—was (and is) told to remind the Anishinaabek of the importance respecting and renewing the relationships between the Anishinaabek and the beavers by giving *sema* and other small gifts of thanks to the beavers who have given their physical being (i.e., pelts) to the Anishinaabek. The Anishinaabek had the responsibility of giving these gifts, but also returning the beaver's bones to the river; thus, the beavers were able to return home and were not truly dead. What is also understood from this story and *Gdoo-naaganinaa* is that the process, not the product, is the treaty—what is remembered, engaged, and practiced. The treaty-as-a-process reminds us that gifts are sacred, but also reinforces the accountability—deeply grounded in respect and honor—between both groups involved. This accountability also does not simply exist between humans, but all life forms, as seen in the practice of returning the beavers to their home.

The written treaty (as we understand it today) was not a standard practice between Native nations and Anglo-European nations and descendants until the eighteenth century. Stark (2010) explains,

> the Anishinaabe understood the entire council deliberations as the treaty. U.S. and Canadian treaty commissioners primarily perceived the council, gift exchange, and dialogue as a prerequisite…[but] the written document rarely represented the vast expressions of indigenous sovereignty, nationhood, and land tenure articulated within the council (149).

It is the process, the continual process, of reciprocal relationship building structured upon the values of respect, responsibility, and renewal(s) that help us understand what it means to decolonize and indigenize. As outlined in this thesis, decolonization is the material (i.e., land) dismantling of settler colonial structures (including the state), norms, and

logics, and I would argue indigenizing calls for an imagining of transformative possibilities and futures within and outside settler confines. Indigenizing, unlike social movements, does not operate under the assumption of the permanency of the settler state. Leanne Simpson (2011) provides this example of indigenizing (or Indigenous resurgence), "we have debated whether Audre Lourde's 'the master's tools can dismantle the master's house,' I am interested in a different question. I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master's house…but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses" (32). The question remains—in building these new house(s), what new relationships do we need to build and foster to for the betterment of all future generations? What new treaties need to be made in the future, and the present?

I would argue the Flint Water Ceremony & Unity Gathering is new contemporary treaty made between the communities of Flint and Michigan, particularly between Indigenous and Black communities. If we understand treaty making as a process, rather than a product, this ceremony and gathering started a new process, relationship, and conversation between humans and the land they live on. It is a treaty informed by building respect between communities and the need to respect the water and its importance in sustaining us as humans. There is a looming threat of rampant water containment, but also water shortages around the world. We must begin to re-conceptualize our relationships with and actions toward water in this era of pipelines, fracking, and pronounced climate change. Responsibility is born between these two communities in understanding they are living on this land together; thus, they must engage in practices that are accountable to each other and the water they drink. Finally,

they began the process of renewal by gathering as two communities to build relationships, in the midst of the various neoliberal assaults on land, communities, and bodies listed in *Nakweshkodaadiiidaa Ekobiiyag,* through ceremony to resist and heal.

TKAMSE (TECUMSEH), SLEEP NOT LONGER, O CHOCTAWS AND CHICKASAWS (1811)[12]

In view of questions of vast importance, have we met together in solemn council tonight. Nor should we here debate whether we have been wronged and injured, but by what measures we should avenge ourselves; for our merciless oppressors, having long since planned out their proceedings, are not about to make, but have and are still making attacks upon our race who have as yet come to no resolution. Nor are we ignorant by what steps, and by what gradual advances, the whites break in upon our neighbors. Imagining themselves to be still undiscovered, they show themselves the less audacious because you are insensible. The whites are already nearly a match for us all united, and too strong for any one tribe alone to resist; so that unless we support one another with our collective and united forces; unless every tribe unanimously combines to give check to the ambition and avarice of the whites, they will soon conquer us apart and disunited, and we will be driven away from our native country and scattered as autumnal leaves before the wind.

But have we not courage enough remaining to defend our country and maintain our ancient independence? Will we calmly suffer the white intruders and tyrants to enslave us? Shall it be said of our race that we knew not how to extricate ourselves from the three most dreadful calamities—folly, inactivity and cowardice? But what need is there to speak of the past? It speaks for itself and asks, Where today is the Pequot? Where the Narragansetts, the Mohawks, Pocanokets, and many other once powerful tribes of our race? They have vanished before the avarice and oppression of the white men, as snow before a summer sun. In the vain hope of alone defending their ancient possessions, they have fallen in the wars with the white men. Look abroad over their once beautiful country, and what see you now? Naught but the ravages of the paleface

[12] Speech recorded from Blaisdell's (2000) *Great speeches by Native Americans*.

destroyers meet our eyes. So it will be with you Choctaws and Chickasaws! Soon your mighty forest trees, under the shade of whose wide spreading branches you have played in infancy, sported in boyhood, and now rest your wearied limbs after the fatigue of the chase, will be cut down to fence in the land which the white intruders dare to call their own. Soon their broad roads will pass over the grave of your fathers, and the place of their rest will be blotted out forever. The annihilation of our race is at hand unless we unite in one common cause against the common foe. Think not, brave Choctaws and Chickasaws, that you can remain passive and indifferent to the common danger, and thus escape the common fate. Your people, too, will soon be as falling leaves and scattering clouds before their blighting breath. You, too, will be driven away from your native land and ancient domains as leaves are driven before the wintry storms.

Sleep not longer, O Choctaws and Chickasaws, in false security and delusive hopes. Our broad domains are fast escaping from our grasp. Every year our white intruders become more greedy, exacting, oppressive and overbearing. Every year contentions spring up between them and our people and when blood is shed we have to make atonement whether right or wrong, at the cost of the lives of our greatest chiefs, and the yielding up of large tracts of our lands. Before the palefaces came among us, we enjoyed the happiness of unbounded freedom, and were acquainted with neither riches, wants nor oppression. How is it now? Wants and oppression are our lot; for are we not controlled in everything, and dare we move without asking, by your leave? Are we not being stripped day by day of the little that remains of our ancient liberty? Do they not even kick and strike us as they do their blackfaces? How long will it be before they will tie us to a post and whip us, and make us work for them in their cornfields as they do them? Shall we wait for that moment or shall we die fighting before submitting to such ignominy?

Have we not for years had before our eyes a sample of their designs, and are they not sufficient harbingers of their future determinations? Will we not soon be driven from our respective countries and the graves of our ancestors? Will not the bones of our dead be plowed up, and their graves be turned into fields? Shall we calmly wait until they become so numerous that we will no longer be able to resist oppression? Will we wait to be destroyed in our turn, without making an effort worthy of our race? Shall we give up our homes, our country, bequeathed to us by the Great Spirit, the graves of our dead, and everything that is dear and sacred to us, without a struggle? I know you will cry with me: Never! Never! Then let us by unity of action destroy them

all, which we now can do, or drive them back whence they came. War or extermination is now our only choice. Which do you choose? I know your answer. Therefore, I now call on you, brave Choctaws and Chickasaws, to assist in the just cause of liberating our race from the grasp of our faithless invaders and heartless oppressors. The white usurpation in our common country must be stopped, or we, its rightful owners, be forever destroyed and wiped out as a race of people. I am now at the head of many warriors backed by the strong arm of English soldiers. Choctaws and Chickasaws, you have too long borne with grievous usurpation inflicted by the arrogant Americans. Be no longer their dupes. If there be one here tonight who believes that his rights will not sooner or later be taken from him by the avaricious American pale-faces, his ignorance ought to excite pity, for he knows little of the character of our common foe.

And if there be one among you mad enough to undervalue the growing power of the white race among us, let him tremble in considering the fearful woes he will bring down upon our entire race, if by his criminal indifference he assists the designs of our common enemy against our common country. Then listen to the voice of duty, of honor, of nature and of your endangered country. Let us form one body, one heart, and defend to the last warrior our country, our homes, our liberty, and the graves of our fathers.

Choctaws and Chickasaws, you are among the few of our race who sit indolently at ease. You have indeed enjoyed the reputation of being brave, but will you be indebted for it more from report than fact? Will you let the whites encroach upon your domains even to your very door before you will assert your rights in resistance? Let no one in this council imagine that I speak more from malice against the paleface Americans than just grounds of complaint. Complaint is just toward friends who have failed in their duty; accusation is against enemies guilty of injustice. And surely, if any people ever had, we have good and just reasons to believe we have ample grounds to accuse the Americans of injustice; especially when such great acts of injustice have been committed by them upon our race, of which they seem to have no manner of regard, or even to reflect. They are a people fond of innovations, quick to contrive and quick to put their schemes into effectual execution no matter how great the wrong and injury to us; while we are content to preserve what we already have. Their designs are to enlarge their possessions by taking yours in turn; and will you, can you longer dally, O Choctaws and Chickasaws?

Do you imagine that that people will not continue longest in the enjoyment of peace who timely prepare to vindicate themselves, and manifest a determined resolution to do themselves right

whenever they are wronged? Far otherwise. Then haste to the relief of our common cause, as by consanguinity of blood you are bound; lest the day be not far distant when you will be left singlehanded and alone to the cruel mercy of our most inveterate foe.

RETURNING TO TKAMSE: VISITING AS A MEANS OF MOBILIZATION

"Visiting is the core of our political system (leaders visiting with all the members of the community), our mobilization (Tkamse and Pontiac visited within and outside of their own nations for several years before they expected mobilization), and our intelligence (people visiting Elders, sharing food, taking care)" (L. Simpson, 2014: 18). Leanne Simpson briefly summarizes the importance of visiting within Native nations and communities, but I ask that we carefully consider what visiting as a means of mobilization can mean for Native communities and nations in Oklahoma. In many of my interviews with elders, the topic or notion of visiting came up fairly often. Even when I listen to my elders when we're out at ceremony or grabbing some lunch after a workday, the notion of visiting is evident and constant, as I sit visiting and listening to them. After the age of eight, Esther grew up with her Aunt and Uncle in south Pottawatomie County attending school at Konawa. Both Esther and Josephine recollected about their "trips to town" (Shawnee or Seminole) as children (interviews, 2016). They remember that their families would typically run some errands, but the majority of the time was spent visiting with other Indian families. "If we were in a certain area of town, there was always a family for us to visit" (Esther, interview, 2016). This notion of visiting is something our elders continue to teach us, push us to do, so that it is not lost. We go visit them, travel to

their homes, take them to doctors appointments—all at the same time knowing we are visiting and learning from them no matter what space or place we are in.

Simpson (2014) reminds us that Tkamse did not just rush into mobilizing various Native peoples and nations, but that he had to take his time, he first needed to visit with those in his community, then surrounding communities, and then traveling to visit more distant communities and nations (such as the Choctaws and Chickasaws). What is commonly forgotten in the Native history before the 1900s, a pan-Indian, racial identity did not exist. Native peoples were just that—peoples—who were members and citizens of their Native communities and nations. These nations had previous histories before Europeans even showed up, just as the English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese had their own histories, disagreements, and alliances/treaties. Tkamse was aware of these histories, but he was also aware of the threat that Anglo-Americans posed to Native nations. We always remember Tkamse, despite the previous groundwork laid by other Native leaders—men and women. I turn to Tkamse because of the community I live in, the people I live around in Oklahoma. These people are his descendants, his relatives, and the other tribal nations in the area are the communities and descendants who allied with him during the War of 1812. I live on the border between the towns of Shawnee and Tecumseh, as I've mentioned previously, these histories are in the landscapes, in the names of these places—but far too often the history is forgotten. When we visit, listen, and learn our memories grow stronger as the collective pieces of our families' histories come together. We remember we are stronger together, despite our cultural differences and even differences of opinion, if we are to truly embrace and embody the work of

indigenizing, we must visit to remember and revision different possibilities and futures grounded in what we've learned from our traditions and the past.

When outlining the importance of treaty making as a process (not a product), we can further understand how visiting is a means of mobilization. Visiting must occur before, during, and after (as a means of renewal) the treaty making council process. In returning to the story, "The woman who married the beaver," we see the importance of visiting in action. No time limit can be set when engaging in the practice of visiting because it prevents the process from being grounded in respect and responsibility in order to build strong, lasting relationships. The woman spent as much time as she needed to living with the beavers, visiting and learning from them, and eventually brought back the knowledge she gained to her community. The relationships between the Anishinaabek and beavers were (and still are) reestablished and sustained through these story-treaties and the traditional practices that the Anishinaabek still follow. I believe we—Native peoples living in central Oklahoma—must look to these stories, these examples of people like Tkamse to find ways to heal, decolonize and indigenize.

This final chapter arose because in all my interviews, every single participant questioned the fact of whether the local tribal nations could actually get along to pursue this type of project. Before a school is pursued or created, we must truly examine what we are trying to do and move forward with intent. There are many reasons why the tribal nations do not get along, but the underlying cause is settler colonization currently articulated through neoliberal reforms, settler tribal sovereignty, multicultural calls for solidarity and inclusion. There are underlying histories that have been forgotten, erased,

or upheld to erase other histories. We forget that the tribal nations in central Oklahoma were once united under Tkamse's leadership during the War of 1812 (and also times before that). We remember other histories—sometimes older, sometimes more present—that divide us, and I am not arguing that we forget these histories and experiences, but we also must remember to act with intent in regards to mutual beneficence. Many of us have teachings about the role of seven generations. We are told to remember to make decisions by thinking of the impact of those decisions seven generations from now. While the tribal nations, peoples, and communities do not have to get along, I do believe they need to visit with each other to remember these values and teachings of mutual beneficence and the seven generations. There was never truly a consensus if the school was the best decision for the community, but there was a consensus that our schools are failing, they are failing our children, but they are also failing other children.

The musicians who created Nakweshkodaadiidaa Ekoobiiyag [Let's Meet Up by the Water], labeled it a call to action, and I would argue an encouragement to come together and visit. We do not live in the same society or place that Tkamse called so many Native peoples and nations to action, but we need to listen to the new orators, organizers, and youth. Christy B sings out that we need to meet up by the water, nakweshkodaadiidaa ekoobiiyag, and we need to listen. We need to meet up, visit—listen and really hear each other, and begin actions of renewal because this system, the structure, we live within and under is not working for anyone. Tkamse (and many others) predicted what would occur when disunited, "unless every tribe unanimously combines to give check to the ambition and avarice of the whites, they will soon conquer us apart and

disunited, and we will be driven away from our native country and scattered as autumnal leaves before the wind" (1811). The time has now come to listen to our ancestors and each other, to find ways to move forward, to imagine futures outside of the settler state—whether it is through a school or not.

EPILOGUE

It is not my decision to make, as simply one person in the community, whether or not a Native-controlled school should be pursued or established. What can be gathered from this project is we must move forward with intent to avoid replicating settler colonial state structures, particularly at this time due to neoliberal school reforms. It is necessary to understand the limits of tribal sovereignty, and not simply it's impact on our lives, but lives of future generations. Just as it is not my decision if a Native-controlled school needs to be created, I do not believe I (or anyone else) should go into these schools and communities and tell them what they need. As Alecia and many others said, if a school is pursued it must be community driven, particularly by the youth in the community. This thesis failed to include youth voices, but as mentioned previously, if the project moves forward these youth voices must be central to the pursuit and construction of the school. Students face continual marginalization and violence in these schools in various forms of systemic racism perpetuated through oppressive action—seen in the use of Indian mascots, language, curricular violence, cultural appropriation, assumed Christian norms, and continuous dispossession (due to the fact that these schools exist on their nations' occupied lands). While students' voices were not surveyed in this work, after five years of working with, building relationships with, the youth in these communities—I have heard and continue to hear their concerns, struggles, and (re)visionings for the future.

What can also be concluded from this research is Oklahoma public schools, the state legislature, and tribal governments need to start listening and hearing our

communities—particularly our youth and their guardians. These are people who are invested in these schools, they want the best for these schools, and it is time for these people to be heard. This is all occurring within and among the backdrop of children, parents, and teachers mobilizing and working together in settings, such as Chicago, New Orleans, and New York. When these communities loose these schools, it leaves a hollow space within the community (as seen in New Orleans and Chicago), but also in many ways these schools have centered and grounded relationships between Native and non-Native community members. When these schools are closed, it can potentially upset the all the relations that have been built across and among the community.

At the moment there is no general consensus about whether a school should or should not be created, but there is a general sentiment that something has to change and real change needs to occur by being directed from within the community, and not from the top down—coming from either the state or tribal nations. Our leaders (state and tribal) need to visit with the people in their communities and those outside their communities to truly listen, hear, and act on their needs. They need to understand the limitations of the current government structures and their failure to truly deconstruct the systems that oppress, marginalize, and colonize Native peoples. Even if tribal nations are acting in the name of "tribal sovereignty" we can just as easily be reaffirming and upholding settler colonial structures and our own colonization.

Finally, as Native scholars grounded in our nations and communities, we must start building further relationships between our disciplines, between the theoretical and the practical. Native studies has been silent for far too long about contemporary Native

education and its impact on our communities. Sandy Grade in 2004 first published that ninety percent of Native students attend public schools (Grande, 2015), and the majority of Native peoples live off the reservation, most commonly in cities. However, Native students and Native education research is not reflecting these demographics, these experiences. I believe Grande's tenth anniversary edition of *Red Pedagogy* (2015) is one of the first dynamic steps forward to building a bridge, building relationships between Native studies and education. Education tends to be a very practical, conservative field that focuses on universal implications and applications. But what if education did value and engage Indigenous/decolonial theories, accepting that we must understand our experiences and positions as situational and contextual (Patel, 2016)? And what if Native studies did not avoid the institution of public education, our children's voices and experiences, what more could we learn from them, as we always learned from our children for centuries?

Appendix

Photo 1:

Photo 2:

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